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THE ABBESS.

A ROMANCE.

By W. H. IRELAND,

AUTHOR OF

BRUNO, OR THE SEPULCHRAL SUMMONS; GONDEZ THE MONK;
RIMUALDO, OR THE CASTLE OF BADAJOS;
THE CATHOLIC, &c. &c.

Let modest matrons at thy mention start,
And blushing virgins, when they read our annals,
Skip o'er the guilty page. SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.

1834.

THE ABBESS.

CHAP. I.

Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile;
 And cry content to that which grieves my heart;
 And wet my cheeks with artificial tears;
 And frame my face to all occasions:
 I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
 I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
 I'll play the orator as well as Nestor;
 Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could;
 And, like a Sinon, take another Troy:
 I can add colours even to the cameleon;
 Change shapes with Proteus, for advantages;
 And set th' aspiring Catiline to school.

SHAKSPEARE.

DON Giuseppe Cazini was the name
 of the signor whose conduct had so
 much astonished the conte Marcello.

He was the natural son of the marchese Ferdinando Monte, who possessed a dark and designing soul, not unacquainted with deeds of guilt. In his infancy, Ferdinando lost an indulgent mother; nor did his father long survive her. Thus he became sole inheritor of the family title and estate, having only his younger brother Felippo to provide for.

To the generality of the world, the marchese appeared to be a man possessing a good understanding, cultivated by a liberal education. He was well acquainted with human nature, which knowledge he turned to his own advantage; nor did his friends suspect the innate passions of his bosom, he having sufficient art to conceal the depravity of his principles beneath the garb of seeming virtue. In his animosities he was implacable and ferocious; neither did he stop at any thing to satisfy his thirst for vengeance.

For

For the space of two years he resided at Florence, during which time he formed an acquaintance with most of the noble families of that city, amongst whom was the duca Bertocci: even the grand duca was partial to Ferdinando, and often admitted him into his confidence.

The intimacy between the marchese and the duca Bertocci, subsisted for some months, when suddenly the duca discontinued his visits, and, from that period, the marchese became sullen and morose. He quitted society, and soon after abjured all communication with the world. When alone, he yielded himself a prey to the gloomy horrors of his soul. Strange reports were whispered concerning his conduct, and various were the conjectures respecting his acquaintance and breach of amity with the duca Bertocci.

Some months after this event, he disappeared from Florence, accompanied by his brother Felippo, and, for some years, resided in a remote part on the frontiers of Italy. His son Giuseppe Cazini being, at that period, about two years old, in this solitude, the marchese attentively watched the bent of his growing inclinations, and, at fifteen, he found his mind stored with many virtues. He was humane and generous, possessing an intrepidity of spirit remarkable at his age : he had a penetrating understanding, and a peculiar sweetness of temper : he was, at this early period, sincere in his professions of regard, and the first principles of honour seemed dawning in his youthful breast. Yet, he possessed two failings, if such they might be called ; too little caution in concealing his dislike, and yielding an over-implicit belief to the tales of others. He was not aware that this unguardedness might
one

one day overwhelm him with guilt and horror.

The marchese, strange as it may appear, endeavoured to eradicate these ripening virtues, which he regretted to find planted in his bosom. Often would he delineate vice in the most pleasing and alluring colours; but his subtle arguments, though glossed with a flow of most elegant language, could not uproot the stubborn virtues of his generous breast, or shake his principles of innate rectitude. Finding, at length, his detestable precepts were ineffectual, and did not tend to lessen Cazini's love of virtue, he took a more sure method of bending him to his horrid purpose. He suddenly absented himself from the society of the few that visited him, none but Felippo, his brother, being admitted into his presence. Giuseppe remarked this change in his father's conduct; and notwithstanding the detesta-

tion in which he held his principles, would joyfully have offered up his life to contribute to his happiness. He made several attempts to gain admission into his chamber, but was always opposed by Felippo.

Being thus banished his society, he had recourse to those authors which he had himself privately procured; for the marchese was no friend to literature, and had never lavished *useless sums* (for so he deemed them) to purchase those productions, which might inform, expand, and elevate the ever-searching soul. His wealth was appropriated to other purposes. No pursuit did he regard, except it tended to the gratification of his sensual appetites; nor did the consciousness that he enjoyed them at the cost of another's happiness diminish in the least his satisfaction.

Signor Cazini was the reputed offspring

spring of an illicit connection. In this secluded situation, without the presence of a human being to enliven the dull unchanging scene, Giuseppe would wander over the surrounding country, which presented some of nature's most prominent features.

To the left, a bold chain of rocks extended themselves as far as the eye could attain. Their shaggy sides were shaded with dark pine and beech, that formed a striking contrast to the milky clouds obscuring their summits. A wide lake skirted their base, reflecting on its silvery surface the dark foliage, that, agitated by the breeze, waved over its cool bosom.

To the right, the enchanted eye roved with delight over beauteous meadows, clothed with pleasing verdure, and interspersed with rich vineyards, teeming with clustering vines, weighed down by luscious grapes.

On a rising ground in front, stood the magnificent remains of an antique temple, formerly dedicated to Diana. Two rows of columns of the Ionic order, led to this once splendid edifice. The portico opened wide, and on either side, were pedestals, whereon stood mutilated statues in white marble. The arch was adorned with the richest workmanship, representing subjects that related to the heathen mythology.

The inside of the temple was spacious; the roof had been supported by fluted columns, of the Corinthian and Composite order, the bases of which were adorned with festoons or heads of Roman emperors. In the walls, at equal distances, were the remains of various statues of granite and porphyry, the pedestals being adorned with fine carved work. The altar, which stood at the farther end of the temple, was supported by the hind, sacred to Diana. A few
paces

paces farther was a superb peristyle of fluted columns, their wrought capitals supporting a noble canopy, beneath which formerly rested the statue of the goddess. The roof of this magnificent fabric was broken down and scattered on the ruined pavement, each fragment affording signal proofs of the skill of the ancients; and the whole combined to impress the soul with a melancholy idea of transitory grandeur.

Such were the scenes that on either side struck Giuseppe's attention. Sometimes he contemplated these remains of earthly splendour; they proved at once the imbecility and strength of human capacity.

"How neglected lie," would he exclaim, "these superb relics, that were reared to be the admiration of futurity! Let the great contemplate these ruined walls, and sicken at the reflection, that

their honours will scarce outlive *themselves*, but must all be levelled with the dust! Let the peasant behold the scene, and rejoice. He will also die; but no “longing, lingering” recollection of earthly pride will enchain him to this world. He will in peace yield up his breath; and, though no pompous procession may accompany him to his long home, no splendid mausoleum announce the spot which holds his mortal frame, his widow’s tears will damp the roses she hath planted on his silent grave; his children’s lips will kiss the verdant sod; and peasants, as they pass the well-known turf, will pause, to yield the unaffected sigh his virtuous memory claims.”

How oft would Giuseppe glorify the Omnipotent, when, on the margin of the still lake, he gazed upon the scene before him! Now, the bright rays of the meridian sun, darting full upon the
lofty

lofty pine and spreading beech, enlivened the dark green colour of their foliage, and, reflecting on the translucent water, made it appear a broad stream of liquid fire. Sometimes, Giuseppe would watch the declining beam, as it laced with streaks of gold the venerable ruin. Fading, they assumed a saffron tinge, which gradually vanished in the twilight. The grey mists, then, exhaling and lightly floating on its surface, veil the glassy lake. At length, the pallid orb of night, arising, cast her silver mantle o'er the darksome scene. The breeze seems then more cool and more refreshing.

'Twas at a time like this, when stilly silence reigned around, that Giuseppe would call to mind the lines of Petrarch to his beloved Laura, or the beauties of Sorrento's sweet bard, the divine Tasso. How would his breast swell with the love of arms, or melt with tender fire,

as he repeated the poet's glowing and harmonious page! 'Twas then a sigh would escape his bosom; 'twas then the tear of regret bedewed his cheek; for his soul was inactive, and no Laura had yet touched his heart.

Thus he passed his days; a pensive melancholy at length stole over him. One evening, after having indulged his wonted sadness, he was returning homeward, when he was suddenly interrupted in his meditations, by the appearance of his uncle Felippo, who thus addressed him:—"You seem thoughtful, Cazini. I have of late observed your motions; why are you thus dejected?"

"I am unhappy," answered Giuseppe; "my soul despises this state of base inaction. Wherefore does my father debar me his presence? Have I e'er offended him by word or deed, that he should thus discountenance his son?"

If

If it were so, I would for ever hide me from his sight, since I must give him pain. I possess no claim to his bounty, 'tis true: I am his son—the offspring of an unhappy mother—but where is that parent? If the marchese despises, *she* will not, surely, forget her child.”

“ Yes,” returned Felippo, “ she *did* forget thee. She abandoned thy father, and quitted, without a sigh, the babe she had just given to the world.”

“ Impossible !” cried Giuseppe ; “ the smallest reptile will protect its young ; and I have heard that the yearnings of a mother’s breast will lead her to love her offspring, though loaded with the most atrocious guilt.”

“ Yes, Giuseppe, not one tear or sigh escaped her adamantine bosom. When absent, she cursed thee, nor would thy death have satiated her unnatural hatred.”

“ Yet, tell me, Felippo, where may I find her ? Even now she, perhaps, re-
pents,

pents, and I may soothe her mental anguish. I may kiss away the tears that bathe her pallid countenance, or lay my head upon her throbbing bosom, that we may mingle mutual tears of joy and pity."

"You will never behold her, Giuseppe; she is an inhabitant of the cold tomb."

"Did she not regret her pitiless conduct towards me?"

"Her death thy father soon became acquainted with; but her sentiments respecting thee remain a secret."

Tears bedewed Giuseppe's cheeks: he felt a sickness at his heart; he would have spoken, but his sighs stifled all utterance.

"Do not wrong the marchese," continued Felippo; "he loves thee, Giuseppe, for thy mother's sake."

"And

“ And did he then love my mother ?” returned Cazini, in broken accents.

“ He idolized her : he would have made her his for ever, had she not basely fled from him. Oh ! had you a soul, Giuseppe, you would not patiently behold your father’s anguish ; you would stir in his cause.”

“ Gracious Heaven !” exclaimed Cazini, “ what can I do that will tend to the restoration of his peace ?”

“ You, and you only, can alleviate his melancholy.”

“ Oh, let me see him ! Conduct me to his presence, which I have so long desired, that on my knees I may offer up my life in token of my duty.”

“ I will accompany you to his chamber,” returned Felippo, fixing his eyes on Giuseppe, which seemed animated with a look expressive of horror and triumph. “ I came purposely to tell you that he desired your presence.”

They proceeded with a quick step towards

wards the mansion, and Giuseppe flew to his father's apartment. He entered, but the marchese was so absorbed in thought that he observed not his approach. He was sitting at a table, whereon were scattered several papers; his right hand concealed within his vest, while the left covered his visage; Giuseppe approached him, and dropping on one knee, exclaimed—"Dearest father, I obey your summons."

At that instant the marchese started from his seat. He drew his hand from his bosom, which grasped a naked dagger, and exclaimed furiously—"Why does vengeance sleep. Will he not feel his father's injuries?"

"He *does* feel and *will* redress them," returned Giuseppe.

The marchese turned his head; he seemed surprised that any one was near him; he quickly secreted the weapon in

in his vest, and approaching his son, pressed him to his heart.

“How has my bosom panted,” cried Giuseppe, “for this renewal of my father’s love! how have I desired to soften his melancholy, and offer up my life that I might procure his peace of mind!”

“Thou art then my child, and worthy of my affection,” returned the marchese, a malicious satisfaction appearing in his countenance; “yes, with thee it lies to restore my lost happiness: thou mayst obtain my everlasting love.” Again he embraced his son.

“Oh, tell me,” cried Giuseppe, “what service can I render my beloved father, that will for ever entitle me to his paternal care?”

“Hear me, Giuseppe,” cried the marchese, “and then be yourself the judge.”

He desired his son to be seated. Then approaching the portal, secured it,

it,

it, that they might be free from interruption.

“ My youthful days were spent at Naples. At nineteen I commenced my travels, and was eight years absent from that city. Having remained there some time, I determined to remove to Florence, and there take up my residence. I was well received at the court of the grand duke of Tuscany. I formed connections with the most distinguished families of Florence, and, during two months, I experienced an uninterrupted state of happiness.

“ I was one day introduced to a nobleman's daughter, who was just emancipated from a convent, where she had been educated from her infancy. She had attained her eighteenth year, was beautiful, innocent, and every way calculated, I thought, to insure me an uninterrupted state of felicity. I soon felt the strongest attachment for her : I took
every

every opportunity of confessing my passion, and found, to my inexpressible joy, that she was not displeased at my addresses.

“About a month after our first meeting, being one day engaged at her father’s house, I met, amongst many other persons, the duca Bertocci, to whom I was then introduced: he appeared about my own age, and by his pleasing conversation, and the marked attention which he seemed to bestow on me, I was strongly prepossessed in his favour. From that time our friendship commenced, and we were seldom absent from each other’s society. I acquainted him with the state of my heart; I confided every thing to his breast: he praised the woman on whom I had placed my affections, and, if possible, stimulated my passion.

“Shortly after the commencement of this friendship, being, one day, heated with the wine I had freely drank at the
duca’s

duca's table, I hastened to the mansion which contained the object of my affections. She was alone; our conversation soon became interesting, when she confessed her passion for me. In the heat of my transport I seized her in my arms, and, unmindful of what I did, yielded to the impulse of the moment, and accomplished her ruin."

"Her ruin!" reiterated Cazini, hastily rising.

"Yes, my son," returned the marchese; "thou art the offspring of that detested act."

Giuseppe's cheeks were covered with a blush; he bent his eyes to the ground, and was silent.

"My delirium soon vanished," continued the marchese; "I vented curses on my own head. Upon my knees, I entreated her forgiveness, whom I had so much wronged. I told her that she

was

was mine, and that I would instantly demand her of her father: her love for me overcame every other consideration. I could not that night bear to remain in her presence, and I soon left her, under the promise of returning the following day.

“ As I was preparing the next morning to fulfil my engagement, the duca Bertocci made his appearance. He observed the perturbation of my spirits, and having questioned me concerning the cause, I told him I was then going to request the hand of her, without whom I could no longer support existence. He offered his services, and, by his insidious arguments, I was prevailed upon to suffer him to make my wishes known to her father. He shortly after returned, telling me I had every thing to hope; but that I must, for a few days, discontinue my visits, as her father wished to consult his daughter on a matter of such importance. Overjoyed

ed at hearing this welcome intelligence, I unguardedly accepted an invitation from the duca, to accompany him for a few days to a villa, some leagues from Florence. Several young noblemen were of the party; we were happy, and I more particularly so than the rest.

“On the evening of the second day, the duca Bertocci pretended to receive letters of importance, which compelled him to set off for Florence. He insisted on our remaining at the villa till his return; we consented, and he was absent from us several days.

“In the course of a week he returned, and I repaired with him to Florence; but conceive my astonishment at finding my proposals were rejected, and I was desired never more to re-enter the mansion which contained the idol of my soul. The villanous duca assumed a well-feigned appearance of wonder, and having again made a thousand professions of friendship, offered to use his endeavours

deavours with her father to procure my happiness.

“Six tedious months elapsed, and I was tortured with unceasing anxiety. Sometimes he inspired me with hopes; at others, he told me that he feared nothing would make her father swerve from his resolution. The fatal moment at length arrived, when the veil was to be torn from my deluded eyes.

“Four tedious days elapsed, without my either seeing or hearing from the duca. My servants were told, when they inquired at his palace, that he had suddenly quitted Florence on business of import. On the evening of the fifth day, a female came to my hotel; she was ushered into my apartment; in her arms she held a new-born infant; I felt a sudden emotion at her approach. She was unable to articulate a syllable, but gave the child into my arms:—thou, Giuseppe, wast that luckless babe. From her I learnt, at length, the dreadful
truth

truth—That the detested duca Bertocci had betrayed the trust I had reposed in him, and had made an offer of his hand and fortune to the father of her I loved—they were accepted. Through his machinations I was forbid the mansion which contained her. Soon after she made known her situation; this did not deter the base villain from putting his plan into execution. My character was defamed—my conduct towards her was placed in the most detested light, and, to complete the scene of deception, she was informed that, like a villain, I had abandoned her. Her mind was imposed upon by these artful falsehoods; her love towards me was converted into hatred; she would not even look upon thee, Giuseppe, but pronounced her malediction on thy head, after which thou wast conveyed to me. The dreadful agitation of my mind produced a raging fever, and I was for many days in a delirious state.

“ When

“ When I regained my recollection, I was then informed that her father, during my illness, had suddenly expired; and that the detested duca, taking advantage of thy mother’s unprotected situation, had conveyed her from Florence as his mistress, having, like a villain, forgot to put his promise of marriage into execution. I demanded honourable satisfaction, but the duca quitted Florence, and evaded my research.

“ Wearied with disappointments, and soured by the treachery of the world, I retired to this solitude, where I have reared you, my son, to be the avenger of your father’s wrongs.”

“ Yes, yes; these are injuries,” hastily returned Giuseppe, “ that far exceed the usual sufferings allotted to mankind. Oh, my father, you have felt the power of love. Your heart has been open to the voice of friendship, a villain usurped the sacred title, and, un-

der that specious garb, betrayed and ruined your peace for ever."

"And does not such a friend merit death?" returned the marchese, in an elevated tone.

"Heaven will doubtless judge him," answered Giuseppe; "his demerits will not go unpunished."

"And will that thought afford me consolation? I still have been wronged. My mind will for ever bear the canker of affliction; nor will the hope of retributive punishment withdraw from thee thy mother's malediction. Arouse thyself, my son—let vengeance animate thy bosom. The wretch yet lives, who is the author of thy father's sufferings—whose machinations drew thy mother's curse upon thy head! with thee it remains to strike the blow, for thou hast been doubly injured."

"Yes, I have lost a tender mother's love; and her imprecations still hang over

over me. I will seek vengeance; yes, I swear——”

Giuseppe rose from his seat, and pronounced the last words with vehemence.

“Hold!” cried the marchese, who instantly presented him a missal. “Swear on this——that you will revenge your own and your father’s injuries.”

“I do most solemnly!” answered Giuseppe, and returned the book into the marchese’s hand, who instantly clasped him to his bosom, while a look of ferocious triumph sat on his gloomy countenance.—“There spoke my son,” did he exultingly exclaim, drawing the dagger from his vest. “Take this weapon, Giuseppe, and use it to extirpate that base wretch, whose arts deprived me of happiness—whose villainy robbed thee of a parent. Take this steel, and, at a fit season, let it pierce the traitor’s
c 2 bosom—

bosom—let it drink his corrupt blood ; I shall then smile with satisfaction—my vengeance will be satiated. Your breast, too, will applaud the equity of the deed.”

There was something terrific in the marchese's aspect, which, added to the dreadful words he had pronounced, struck horror to the soul of Giuseppe, and he remained for some time motionless. He was suddenly roused, at hearing his father pronounce these words—“Take the weapon, or, like a coward, break your oath, and henceforth merit my hatred and contempt.”

Giuseppe gradually raised his trembling arm : he grasped the handle of the dagger. At that moment the warm blood curdled round his heart. A stream of liquid fire now ran through every vein ; his sight thickened, and for a moment all pulsation ceased. He
sunk

sunk upon a chair, and remained for some minutes in a state of stupefaction.

On his recovery, he beheld the marchese pacing the chamber in violent agitation, often striking his breast and forehead. Giuseppe's heart melted; he flew to his father, and throwing himself at his feet, clung round his knees, exclaiming—"Take me once more to your bosom; your unhappy Giuseppe will revenge your wrongs, and bury the weapon in the villain's heart."

The marchese raised him, and after observing him for some time in silence, cried—"Yes, I will confide in your courage; you shall still be my son."

Giuseppe soon quitted his father's presence. When in his chamber, he endeavoured to banish the unpleasant thoughts that agitated his mind. He tried to reconcile the murder he had sworn to perpetrate with the strict rules

of justice. "Has not the duca been guilty of every crime that can degrade the human soul? Has he not murdered my father's peace of mind? And what were death to the loss of happiness? Has he not broken the sacred bond of friendship, and brought a mother's malediction on her infant child? Justice cries aloud for such a villain's death. But will the law avenge his crimes? No; and must justice then sleep? She shall rouse to action at my call. This arm shall vindicate her cause."

Such were the fallacious arguments that fired the youthful breast of Giuseppe, and urged him to the perpetration of the most detested deed of guilt. At length, he threw himself upon his couch, but his slumbers were disturbed by the most frightful visions. Unable to sustain the agonies of his mind, he
rose.

rose. It was past midnight. He felt a trepidation unknown to him before.

“ Gracious Heaven !” he exclaimed, “ and does the mere thought of murder haunt the fancy sleeping, and thus appal the mind ? What will then be my sensations, when I have realized the oath made to my father ?”

Giuseppe approached the window, and gazed unmoved on the sublime scenery before him. The chaste moon beamed with uncommon splendour, the tufted woods partly shading the broad lake beneath, which beautifully contrasting, added to the brightness of that part which reflected her lustre, giving it the most enchanting appearance ; the country on the opposite side was enlightened by her silver rays ; and the venerable ruin contributed to heighten the grandeur of the scene.

As Giuseppe fixed his vacant gaze on these objects, which had so often afforded satisfaction to his mind, he beheld a figure slowly pass beneath his window, and on a minute inspection, traced beneath the cloak that enveloped the person, the marchese his father. His arms were folded, his head bent to the ground, and he seemed occupied in deep meditation. Now he stopped, and placing his hand on his cheek, would for a minute appear lost in thought. Then, suddenly extending his hand, as if a new idea had struck him, he again proceeded in the same deliberate pace, when he was soon joined by Felippo. Their conversation seemed interesting, they talked aloud, and several incoherent expressions which reached Giuseppe's ear, convinced him that he was the object of their discourse.

A considerable time elapsed, ere they entered the mansion. Giuseppe again
endeavoured

endeavoured to sleep, but his restless mind banished the soft spell from his pillow, and ere the clarion bird of morn had sent forth his shrill note, or the soaring lark had warbled his sweet melody, he had descended from his chamber, to taste the early dew of morning.

On his return, he was admitted to the marchese's apartment, in whose conduct he perceived the most visible alteration. Felippo had also dissipated the gloom that usually clouded his dark countenance, and they conversed, during the repast, on various topics. Giuseppe also learned that it was his father's intention to visit Naples, and that the following morning was appointed for the commencement of their journey. The day was spent in preparing for their departure.

In the evening he took his usual walk to the ruined temple; he gazed

on every object, that from his early years had been the subject of his contemplations. He felt a sadness at his heart; he began to repeat some favourite stanzas, but could not proceed, for they were calculated to augment his melancholy. He reclined on that stone which had so often supported him; a heavy sigh escaped his breast, which was answered by the evening breeze, that murmuring through the mutilated walls, seemed to sympathize in his sorrow. He bent his eyes upon the pavement—they became dim with tears. He rose, at length, and quitted the ruins; he could not refrain, but turned his head. Unconsciously, he again bent his course towards the temple. He traversed the well-remembered labyrinths, and then proceeded with lingering step, and many a retrospective view, towards the margin of the lake. Now, he beheld the last tinge of the declining sun, which had so often inspired him with
a love

a love of all-wonderful nature; it fell upon the beloved spot he had just quitted. His emotions became too powerful; he turned his eyes towards the crystal surface, his tears mingled with its pure waters and ruffled its smooth bosom. He felt a cold tremour circulate through his veins, and now the thin vapours skimmed over the silent lake. He turned his steps towards the villa, and as he fixed his regard upon the lofty forest that crowned the rugged steeps, waving their dark green foliage over the cool expanse of water, the plaintive wind that fanned their rustling leaves, seemed sighing to partake his sorrows.

The following morning, at an early hour, Giuseppe quitted the abode of his infantile years. As the carriage drove off, he could not repress his sensations. The marchese rallied him, for yielding to such feminine ideas; and Felippo,

who was unacquainted with every nice feeling of the heart, and whose character was similiar to that of his brother, deemed his conduct pusillanimous and unbecoming the manly soul. Thus Giuseppe was compelled to restrain the noble workings of his breast, and assume an appearance of calmness that was in every respect foreign to his heart. He cast a look upon the receding landscape. Now he caught a glimpse of the ruins, as the carriage wound round the base of a tremendous rock, and for the last time he beheld the lake and the dark tufted wood.

“ Ah,” thought Giuseppe, “ why did I wish to quit that peaceful spot? I knew not the pangs I should feel at leaving it for ever. Will the gay scenes of life afford such pleasures? Will the triumph of war, divine Tasso! or will the charm of thy Laura, oh Petrarch! prince of poets, compensate my lost happiness?”

happiness? No; they vanish before the more powerful charm of tranquil solitude. Can the victor's laurel—the brilliant chariot wherein he sits enthroned, with pining captives following, attended by the shouts of countless multitudes, or the trophied arch, afford such real satisfaction to the mind as bounteous nature's variegated page? Can beauty's melting eye enchant my soul, compared with the glorious luminary just bursting from the east? Impossible! The one may ravish my mortal sense, the other elevates and enchants my soul. Solitude is a blessed state, where truth's radiant beam, dispersing the clouds of worldly prejudice, full blazes. In peaceful solitude, the soul expands, and kindles into rapture. When the tumultuous din of society no more distracts us, then, unshackled from those little nothings, that for the most part occupy the short term of our existence, we feel the glorious movement.

ment. Your immortal part—yes, the divine soul, like an unclouded sun, then breaks forth, disdaining the corporeal substance that enfolds it, and we sail in the ethereal regions—we gain the azure heaven—we contemplate the all-wondrous system—we behold myriads of worlds, the velocity of motion, the bulk of matter, and the infinity of space. We see the various luminaries reflecting light refulgent; still we soar, but suddenly our course is checked, when we would behold the Mighty Architect, whose incomprehensible omnipotence doth sway the whole. We cannot pierce the ever-glorious light that veils his awful majesty; for, as the liquid fire, flowing from *Ætna's* gulf, in heat and lustre is inferior to the noontide sun, so is this dazzling orb to that light inexpressible, surrounding the Supreme Divinity. These are the thoughts attendant on solitude—this is the philosophy of the recluse, and the real liberty

ty that every mortal may enjoy. Oh that mankind would embrace the wondrous system, and not grasp at ideal happiness! Genuine virtue would then inherit each bosom; every chimerical doctrine would be expelled society; the world would then become one glorious scene of virtuous emulation; for every vicious principle being banished from the breast, we should only live to worship the Creator, and to love his works."

Such were the thoughts that occupied Giuseppe's bosom—such was his veneration for solitude—such his ideas of Divine Omnipotence.

They continued for some days to travel through a most fertile country. During their journey, the marchese would at times converse with his son; but Felippo was continually wrapped in gloomy meditation.

They

They arrived at Rome, and Giuseppe beheld, with wonder and astonishment, that former queen of empires. From thence they proceeded, and at length arrived at Naples, surnamed the noble, where Giuseppe was introduced, for the first time, to the busy haunts of men. A secret pleasure fluttered around his heart, but it was transitory. His imagination wandered to those silent retreats he had quitted, and, sighing, he mentally exclaimed—"Are these sumptuous habitations free from deceit?—will the gaudy chambers and gay voluptuous throngs that inhabit them, cherish that love of virtue which my solitude has inspired?"

The hotel of the marchese Monti, where the carriage stopped, was a most noble building, and its interior was fitted up with taste and elegance. In a few days the mansion was crowded with visitors, that came to congratulate him on
his

his return to Naples. He gave splendid entertainments, and launched into all the dissipation of the city. He seemed to have forgotten his former melancholy: yet although Giuseppe was overwhelmed with caresses, and introduced into all societies, he was pained by observing, at times, a gloomy malignancy on his father's countenance, and too often perceived that his kindness towards him was not in perfect unison with the genuine dictates of his heart.

The elegant person, engaging deportment, and strength of understanding, displayed by Giuseppe, soon rendered him the universal admiration. With the sage he would philosophize—the mildness of his manners endeared him to men of taste—and he was esteemed by the females the most handsome and accomplished of his sex.

About a month after their arrival at
Naples,

Naples, Giuseppe first beheld donna Antonia, daughter of monsignor Carlo Valenti. She was beautiful, and possessed the most refined understanding. Signor Cazini soon became sensible of the power of her attractions; he was assiduous in his behaviour towards her; no society had charms where Antonia was not present, and his soul became inspired with that passion, which in solitude he had deemed but an earthly sentiment.

Antonia soon learned the state of his heart, by the feelings that agitated her own, and they soon confessed a mutual love. This attachment did not long remain a secret. The signor Ippolito, Antonia's brother, remarked this alteration in his sister. She was frequently absorbed in reflection; frequent sighs would escape her lips, and she lost all relish for society. He in vain endeavoured to draw from her the cause of
her

her dejection—she resisted all his entreaties. Antonia's embarrassment in Giuseppe's presence, at length, betrayed to Ippolito the real state of her heart; he took the earliest opportunity of questioning her on the state of her breast. She was too ingenuous to conceal the truth, and he learned, with regret, the progress of her passion.

Ippolito was a youth whom nature had endowed with many virtues; nor did he disown the noble qualifications of signor Cazini; but pride was the predominant passion of his soul: he therefore admired Giuseppe as a man, but could not, for a moment, look upon him in the light of a brother. The idea of an illegitimate becoming so nearly connected with his family, filled him with the most dreadful apprehensions, and he immediately made his father acquainted with the situation of Antonia's heart. All the pride of an
Italian

Italian kindled in his bosom, and his daughter was in consequence removed from Naples.

Signor Ippolito did not disguise his sentiments; for in a private interview with Giuseppe, he informed him that from his sister he had been informed of his passion. He censured her unjustifiable conduct, in suffering him to continue so long his fruitless addresses. He allowed Cazini all the merit due to his abilities; and concluded by assuring him, that, under any other circumstance but the present, he should be proud to hail him as a brother.

Giuseppe felt mortified on his own account, but pitied more the fallacious principles of Ippolito. He thought it beneath him to make any answer, and a coolness subsisted on either side.

Some time after this interview, Antonia

tonia found means to convey a letter to Giuseppe. It contained the most tender assurances, and concluded with a solemn vow, that she would not be compelled to bestow her heart, but on the deserving object that already occupied it. Giuseppe, according to Antonia's desire, intrusted a written answer to the care of the person who had conveyed her letter, in which he assured her, in the most passionate terms, that his heart was dedicated to her, and that death alone should make him relinquish the claim he had upon her affections. He likewise acquainted her with the meeting that had taken place between himself and Ippolito, and concluded by describing, in lively colours, the agonies his mind had sustained, since her departure from Naples.

The letter was dispatched by the messenger, who was one of the domestics of Antonia's father; nor did Giuseppe

seppe forget to reward his kind services; but, unfortunately, soon after he had quitted the gate of the hotel, he was met on the Strada by signor Ippolito, who instantly made inquiries concerning his sister, naturally supposing that she had dispatched him with some message to her father. The servant appeared confused, when Ippolito, in an authoritative tone, desired to know the purport of his visit to Naples. The poor fellow, not daring to disobey, immediately related his commission, and gave up Giuseppe's letter. Enraged at this discovery, he instantly repaired to the hotel of the marchese Monti—he found Cazini alone. Having produced his billet, he requested to see that of his sister, which had authorized his answer; but Giuseppe refused to gratify his curiosity. Ippolito's rage increased to madness; and after some warm conversation, he insisted that Cazini should relinquish

linquish all idea of his sister. To this Giuseppe gave a positive refusal.

Ippolito then desired to know what would be his determination, if he should receive under Antonia's hand a direct refusal of his love, and her desire to be never more molested by his presence, or troubled with his epistles.

"I should conclude," returned Giuseppe, "that your sister acted not according to the genuine feelings of her heart, but that her actions were controlled by a rigid parent's decrees, and the glowing emotions of her soul were sacrificed to the hot pride of an offended brother."

Ippolito frowned and bit his lips.

"In such a case," continued Giuseppe, "I should perhaps strive to forget Antonia, not on her father's or her brother's

brother's account, but to prevent those tyrannical measures which they might pursue, to force her to compliance with their will."

"Signor," returned the enraged Ippolito, "you shall soon hear from my sister, and then from *me*." He laid a peculiar emphasis on the concluding word, and quitted the chamber with precipitation, leaving Giuseppe a prey to the most dreadful apprehensions on his beloved Antonia's account.

The hotel of the marchese Monti was each day crowded with visitors; every luxury was procured, though at the most extravagant price; and nothing was seen but one continued round of mirth and festivity. The marchese, too, indulged his propensity for gaming to an excess. Giuseppe gazed on this scene in mute astonishment. He dreaded the effects of these luxurious banquets; he feared lest the marchese's love of play
should

should prove detrimental to his health and fortune; for his passions being violent in the extreme, he either could not conceal his excess of joy at experiencing the smiles of the fickle goddess, which laid him open to the machinations of the designing, or giving way to the most violent passion, when she favoured not his wishes.

The total alteration in his father's conduct did not a little increase his surprise. During eighteen years, he had lived retired, a gloomy misanthrope; now, he courted society, and even the deceitful smile of the sycophant seemed to afford him pleasure. Often would he recur to his dreadful oath, and shudder at the recollection; yet he was amazed at his father's silence on that head. Thus was Giuseppe's mind agitated by turns with love for Antonia, apprehensions for a parent, and horror at the thought

of a crime he conceived himself bound to perpetrate.

A fortnight elapsed since his interview with Ippolito—during which time he received no letter from him or his adored sister. He attributed this silence to the resolute mind of Antonia, who, he supposed, would not be induced, by force or entreaty, to annul the solemn vow which she had made him, of eternal fidelity. Giuseppe still continued in this state of incertitude, during several days, when he was one evening summoned to the marchese's closet, where he found him in close conversation with his brother. A dreadful gloom clouded his countenance; his brows were contracted, and his appearance was ghastly. The features of Felippo likewise betrayed the strong agitation of his soul, and his dark eyes rolled, emitting a frenzied fire. The marchese instantly addressed his son in these words:—

“ Have

“ Have you, Giuseppe, forgot your oath?”

“ No,” returned Cazini; “ I remember it full well.”

“ Be then firm in your resolve, for you must shortly put it to the test. Now, go to your chamber, and prepare for your immediate departure from Naples.”

“ What, my father! and must I quit you at so short a notice!”

“ At twelve, this night, repair to my closet.”

Giuseppe would have spoken, but the marchese darting an angry look, motioned him to leave the apartment. He was too well acquainted with his father's disposition to hesitate, and therefore immediately quitted his presence.

While occupied in preparing for this precipitate journey, Giuseppe experienced the most dreadful sensations.—“ I

shall never more behold the object of my adoration," did he exclaim: "her brother will regard me in the light of a coward, and deem my journey the effect of fear at his resentment. And what is my errand? I go to perpetrate a crime, which must preclude all idea of Antonia; for, can a murderer, though he should escape detection, ever after stand before the presence of virtue?—can a wretch, amenable to the laws of his country, and whose life justice will deem a forfeit—can such a monster, with his contaminating touch, pollute the fair form of an angel? Forbid it, Heaven! No, rather let me be consumed by this fire that preys upon my heart, or let the punishment attendant on my guilt, exterminate at once my loathed existence. But what may the hereafter prove? Perhaps, an endless torture, compared to which, the pangs of conscience would be a blessed state of mind."

The

The idea was too dreadful, and he endeavoured to dissipate the thought. Such was the effect love had produced on Giuseppe's soul. The idea of revenge vanished before the potent charm; he forgot a mother's injuries; he adduced no arguments to warrant the flagrant act of murder, though he had before conceived himself empowered to judge, condemn, and punish the offender.

At night he obeyed the marchese's command, and repaired to his closet; but his astonishment was great, on beholding his father and Felippo both prepared to accompany him. They descended in silence, and entered a carriage, which stood at the gate of the hotel, which drove off with the greatest velocity. They frequently changed horses during the night, but took little refreshment on the road, and scarcely

one word escaped either the marchese or Felippo.


From the window of the carriage, Cazini anxiously watched the gradual approach of day. Night's sable robe was not spangled with celestial gems, nor did the silvery sphere, moving in the boundless expanse, shed forth her mild rays: a murky gloom involved each object in impenetrable darkness, and, ere the first dawn of morning, the o'ercharged atmosphere unburthened itself in a plenteous fall of rain. Swiftly the clouds dispersed, when in the east arose a grey light. Gradually appeared sweet dimple-cheeked Aurora, when soon the saffron tint assumes the rose's dye. Now her light azure, thickly with golden streaks beset, adorns the enlightened hemisphere.

The early tenants of the wood carol their melodious matin song; and as their
light

light forms wave the tender spray, trembling drop their dewy pearls, spangling the earth's green surface. Forth from the liquid bosom of the briny deep, bursts forth the fiery-fronted sun; his floating bulk tremendous, illumines the immensity of expanse; his ardent countenance defies man's prying eye; even his bright rays dazzle our astonished sight, as awe-struck, we bow before the unsearchable mover of the whole.

Cazini's noble mind was warmed with an enthusiastic glow; his grateful heart internally offered a thankful prayer—his soul was elevated to his Maker. Long did he continue thus entranced, his exuberant brain wildly roving in fancy's flowery field. At length the vision faded, his thoughts returned to sublunary objects; dejectedly his head sunk upon his heaving bosom—Cazini remembered he was but mortal.

The marchese Monti and his brother Felippo continued absorbed in the same gloomy silence. Cazini took an old romance from his pocket, and, after carelessly turning over several leaves, stopped at a page, which instantly engaged his attention; the subject was as follows:—



A FRAGMENT.

“ Ruffle not her gentle slumbers, ye visions, that appal by night. Let her dreams be pleasing,” said the virtuous youth; “ for, oh! she is the secret mover of my soul. Wave not her glossy locks, ye sighing breezes! still let them negligently twine her lily neck; for my love is most gentle among the daughters of men. Sleep, oh, sleep, my Monzaga; thy knight watches by thee. I will hover o’er thee, as the dove fostering its young; but should aught assail my love, more furious than the galled

galled boar, by hunters chased, or the fanged tigress of its whelps bereft, I'll tear the base intruder. Sure thy fleeting fancy wanders to me; a cherub's smile trembles on thy dew-spangled lip. Oh that I might kiss that roseate mouth! No—the purity of my flame forbids the theft; I should awaken my snow-tinctured maiden. The dying sound of gentlest music, gliding o'er the surface of a moon-reflecting stream, is not so soft as the voice of her I adore. The sparkling nectar on chaste Dian's lip, vies not with the sweetness of her mouth. Her blue eyes mock the dew-dripping violet's tint. She is fleet as the dusky roe, that bounds o'er the heath; she is graceful as the willow waving in the wind. Such is my beautiful fair one, such the idol of my soul. But, soft! she moves; her languishing eyes uncloze; my heart is gladdened with their azure beams; how does my maid of lily hue?"

“My visions were heavenly,” said the damsel; “for I dreamt of thee, my love. But let us arise from the damp green turf. Again I’ll climb the steepy hills. With thee I’ll chase the horn-branching stag. Phœbus yet tops the distant mountains—our fleet hounds are ready for the course—come, my love, let us away.”

As a lightning-struck oak, the knight dropped his head; as the fond mother weeping o’er her lifeless babe, so he became sad.—“Howl forth the sound, ye winds—let the words issue from the bosom of rocks,” cried the youth; “I cannot breathe them to my love.”

Quickly she seized his robe—looked wistful in his face, and then reclined her head upon his bosom. His sinewy arm twined her slim waist; his hand locked one of hers. Monzaga’s cheek was moistened with his tears; her heart sickened, and her faltering tongue, in
tremulous

tremulous accents, breathed forth her hero's name.

Sad was the soul of the gentle knight. As the keen blast nips the blooming rose, so had the touch of sorrow withered his bleeding heart.—“ Be comforted !” he cried ; his voice was not heard, for the maid was folded in misery's arms. “ I go but for a season, Monzaga ; soon shall we meet again ; my glave shall then be sheathed for ever. The time is come—this night I must depart—my honour's pledged. How will my love glory, when my brow is again graced with the victor's wreath ! thy father too, renown'd in fame, will give thee to my arms for ever. Such is the oath he swore to me, upon his thigh-kissing weapon, as in the bloody field the dazzling sun gleamed full upon its glittering blade.”

“ Court not the battle's heat,” exclaimed the maid, “ quit not again thy chill-struck Monzaga ; for never shall I

see thee more—never wilt thou grace my father's board; the hills will not re-echo with the dulcet sound of thy bugle; thy fleet dogs ne'er will bound the turf, nor wind the mazes of the gloomy forest. Never shall I rest me in the shade by yon cool brook, nor will its gentle rippling lull my soul to sleep; never more wilt thou sit beside me and press this hand; no, no, thou ne'er wilt see Monzaga more."

The knight to his bosom pressed the maid, and bore her fainting to her father's hall. His arms were all prepared; his courser stood without the court-yard. Soon his limbs were girt with pondrous steel; again he speeded to the presence of his love. Her aged parent held him to his heart, and then renewed his oath. The youth approached, he bent his knee, and softly pressed Monzaga's lily hand. His touch thrilled her soul; she started from her trance, and threw herself within his open arms. Oft they
kissed

kissed and breathed their vows—oft renewed their tender protestations. Now he broke from her loved embrace ; she screamed ; the sound recalled him, and again he flew towards her. Her father could not bear the sight ; he waved his hand ; the weeping damsels in their arms supported Monzaga from his presence. Her voice echoed through the hall ; her words chilled the sorrowing youth—“ Farewell, farewell ! Monzaga bids thee adieu for ever !”

Swift the knight rushed forth ; he vaulted his war-steed ; the noble creature felt his well-known lord upon his back. Impetuous he bounded cross the drawbridge, and scouring o’er the heath, soon bore his rider far from Monzaga’s loved abode.

A Romance Ballad

OF THE

***BLACK PLUMED KNIGHT AND MONZAGA
THE MAID OF LILY HUE.***

Lady fair, with pity listen !

To Monzaga's tale give ear :

May such woes ne'er chill thy bosom ;

May'st thou shed the pitying tear !

Though you boast the rose's colour,

Mingled with the lily's dye ;

Though your locks be soft and waving,

Azure tinctur'd your chaste eye.

Though your coral lips, half open,

Polish'd ivory display ;

Though your gentle breath be scented

With the perfum'd sweets of May.

Though your form be slim and graceful ;

Though with Venus' charms you're ray'd ;

All combin'd you're not more perfect

Than the lily-tinctur'd maid.

If you're stamp'd with honour's signet,

If your soul bear virtue's dye,

Then with lily-cheek'd Monzaga,

You, oh peerless dame, may vie.

Long

Long she mourn'd her lost knight's absence,
Sighing forth his much-lov'd name ;
Whilst the val'rous youth was reaping
Glory and immortal fame.

Twofold sorrow then assail'd her ;
Icy age's chilling breath
Shook Monzaga's hoary parent,
Soon, alas ! he slept in death.

Calm she bore the will of Heaven,
Bowing at its dread decree ;
Unremitting prayers she offer'd
Meekly on her bended knee.

Clarion Fame her worth recording,
Lords and knights with love were fir'd ;
Many strove to win her favour—
None the tender flame inspir'd.

Now I'll sing the storied ballad
Of a gloomy black-plumed knight,
Whose proud front, and limbs gigantic,
Were with sable arms bedight.

On his helm a spreading plumage,
Waving fann'd the ambient air :
Glossy feathers pluck'd from raven
Was the crest he us'd to wear.

On his front a casque of iron
Veil'd his furrow'd brow so dire :
Pent within his close-lock'd beaver,
Roll'd his eyes like ardent fire.

Pond'rous mail of linked iron
Round his body rattling hung :
From his shoulders a broad target
O'er his back was loosely slung.

Jointed plates with thongs of leather,
On his sinew'd limbs were lac'd :
Round his loins a broad belt buckled,
Which his massive weapon brac'd.

Oft he strode a fiery courser,
Sleek and of the ebon dye ;
Bristle-man'd and nostril snorting,
Foam-mouth'd, red, fire-gleaming eye.

Hugely fram'd and toughly jointed,
Full-vein'd, broad-back'd, large of bone,
Hoofs that tore the earth's green bosom—
Hoofs that rent the rugged stone.

Such the dreadful black-plum'd knight was,
Who was lord of Gonda's steep,
Whose proud turrets soar'd to heaven,
Frowning on the glassy deep.

Zalba's gentle rippling waters,
Gonda's rugged base did lave,
Gloomy mantled towers reflecting
On its smooth and silv'ry wave.

None his castle dar'd to enter,
He alone therein did dwell :
Festive mirth ne'er rung those chambers ;
All was drear as death's dark cell.

One only sound the silence broke,
'Twas the gloomy deep-ton'd bell ;
That summon'd shrouded spectres forth,
Screaming at the direful knell.

Then the knight his pond'rous helmet
From his low'ring front would draw,
Which display'd his lank pale visage,
Striking fear and chilling awe.

Bristly locks his temples shaded,
Bushy brows his large eyes crown'd,
Which, within their sockets moving,
Roll'd like fiery spheres around.

Death's hue o'erspread his meagre face,
Pale and furrow'd was his skin ;
His nose was long and aquiline,
Hollow was his cheek and thin.

His

His open'd mouth large teeth display'd,
On his pointed chin appear'd
A rugged grizzly tuft of hair,
Which Time's hoary hand had sear'd.

Of Monzaga's heav'nly features,
Of her skin so wond'rous fair,
Of her eye so chastely beaming,
Of her virtues passing rare—

These by fame so oft repeated,
Fir'd this knight of sable plume :
She, his hateful love refusing,
Fill'd his soul with horrid gloom.

Direst hate his black mind harbour'd,
In his breast revengeful ire
'Gainst Monzaga, lovely maiden,
Burnt with most malignant fire.

Soon he plann'd his horrid purpose ;
Silent in the dead of night,
To Monzaga's peaceful mansion,
Stole the grim and murd'rous knight.

All were hush'd in softest slumbers,
Save Monzaga, gentle maid,
Who, before the chapel's altar,
O'er her beads devoutly pray'd.

Thither

Thither by the pale reflection
Of the lamp's blue trembling light,
Cautious stole the black-arm'd warrior,
To the maiden fair and bright.

Now she views his lengthen'd shadow
O'er the pavement swiftly glide ;
Now she trembling sinks with terror ;
Lo ! the knight stands at her side.

Now his arm her waist encircles—
From the chapel swift he flies,
Vain she struggles and intreats him,
Vainly rends the air with cries.

Quick he vaults his tall black courser,
With Monzaga at his side ;
Now he spurs his jetty bearer,
Fleet as wind o'er hills they glide.

Now they course o'er heaths so dreary,
Now they climb dread rocks so steep ;
Now they glide through forests gloomy,
Now they plunge in torrents deep.

Soon as Gonda's gates they enter,
Straight the gloomy ruffian hies,
To a dungeon, damp and dreary,
Bears his pallid fear-struck prize.

“ Now,

“ Now, proud lily-cheek’d Monzaga,”
Cried the knight, with sullen voice,
“ Quickly yield thy beauties to me,
Or grim death’s alone thy choice.”

“ Yield to thee, thou horrid monster !”
With indignant look she cried ;
“ No, with dust I’ll gladly mingle,
I’ll become death’s willing bride.”

Thrice her chastity he tempted,
Little his dire strength avail’d ;
She was trebly arm’d with virtue—
All his lustful efforts fail’d.

Furious grown, to earth he struck her,
Seiz’d her loose dishevell’d hair ;
Now Monzaga nam’d her lover,
Then to Heaven breath’d forth a prayer.

Now his direful hand uplifted,
Brandish’d the death-dooming glave ;
All her tears, her angel figure,
Naught avail’d her life to save.

The sharp edge her neck assailing,
Streaming flow’d the purple gore ;
Stiff to earth her corse then falling,
Her pale head the murd’rer bore.

Such his wicked hell-fraught soul was,
Such his cruelty and rage ;
Her death his vengeance had not quench'd,
All could not his ire assuage.

Still, whene'er the sullen clapper,
Beat the dreary midnight hour,
A lambent flame of pallid hue,
Gleam'd from each embattl'd tower.

Lofty casements brilliant shining,
Cast a faint and trembling light ;
Groans were heard, the turrets rocking,
Then appear'd the sable knight.

Lo ! his right hand grasp'd the rapier,
All besmear'd with purple gore ;
Snowy veil of fair Monzaga,
Twin'd around his arm he wore.

In his left hand, all appalling,
Rude he grasp'd her clotted hair,
Which alive, her front adorning,
Purple turned, though once so fair.

Slow he pass'd the chambers spacious,
Then the dreary vaulted halls,
Grimly hung black suits of armour,
Rang'd against the damp green walls.

Last the dungeon he would visit ;
There with a malignant grin,
Loud he'd taunt the mould'ring body,
Vaunting his abhorred sin.

Glory's son, meanwhile returning,
Ne'er display'd the victor's pride ;
Love his beacon—only craving
Chaste Monzaga for his bride.

Soon he gain'd the well-known castle,
Soon he learnt the dreadful truth ;
Madness fill'd the throbbing bosom,
Of the noble-minded youth.

Through the world he vow'd to seek her,
Two long years he vainly strove ;
Anguish tore his manly bosom,
Lo ! he join'd his lily love.

His bright arms gleamed bluely, reflecting the moon's pale beams. The knight continued immersed in deep contemplation, as his long-maned steed proceeded o'er the black heath.

Soon a gloomy forest met his course ;
he entered, when the moon became veiled

ed

ed by the dark green tufted canopy, thickly spreading o'er his head. The sullen breeze whistled through the foliage, and ever and anon was heard the snorting of his courser. Still louder howled the chilling wind—the leaves rustled—the distant thunders rolled—the lightning vivid gleamed, pierced the forest's gloom, and torrents spouted from the lowering atmosphere. The knight applied the goading spur—his proud bearer, foaming, bounded, and, as his large hoofs struck the dew-dripping turf, the rattling of his rider's arms still urged his pace. Onward he hied, the storm continuing with redoubled violence. Long he proceeded in his course, till wind and thunder both were hushed, and rain no longer fell. The knight stayed the fleetness of his horse, patted, with iron-mantled hand, his bowed neck, then stroked his bristled mane: suddenly he started—a sound was heard; again it was repeated; a distant bell, with

with sullen note, chimed forth the midnight hour.

The knight bent his way towards the dreary sound; again the watery moon gleamed forth, when he beheld the lofty embattled turrets of a castle. Now a faint waving light beamed from the arched casements. The knight approached the uplifted drawbridge; loudly he called, but the echo of his voice died in the midnight blast: he repeated the summons, but no answer was returned. At length, he beheld a broad-rimmed iron shield, by a rusty chain suspended to the knotted trunk of a withered tree, whose leafless branches, bending o'er the broad moat's glassy surface, reflected on its bosom their fantastic forms.

The knight sprang from his steed; the clatter of his arms echoed around: from his girdle he drew forth his massive faulchion; he approached — his nerved arm struck with violence the
iron

iron plate. Like stream impetuous, whose intercepted course foaming, rattles down a rugged steep, or pealing thunder heard from the summit of a cloud-mantled hill, issued a bellowing sound: the words resounded, and the castle's drear courts rung with the horrid din.

The drawbridge moved—the chains grated on their rollers. The knight affixed his neighing courser to a tree, and boldly passed the moat; but found the castle gates were locked. Thrice he struck the brazen plate, when slowly on its hinges moved the portal: he paused—for no hand was seen.

He defied fear's chilling impulse, and sternly proceeded across the court-yard. Two folding doors stood open wide; he entered, and slowly ascended a broad oak staircase. At the top, a spacious hall presented itself to his view: he passed on, when his eye was struck with numerous coats of sable mail, ranged

along the walls. He continued his course—suddenly the moon became obscured by a rain-fraught cloud, and all was involved in darkness.

A hollow groan was heard. The knight unsheathed his polished glaive; again a noise seemed to approach; he listened attentively, but all was silent: again he heard a groan—it was repeated, and footsteps lightly glided o'er the pavement.

“Who passes?” cried the knight.

A pause ensued.

Instantaneously a lambent flame illumined the chamber. The knight beheld at his side a human form, completely veiled.—“What art thou?” exclaimed he.

A deep-fetched groan was the only answer to his interrogatory.

“In God I place my only trust,” continued he; “Christ is my Redeemer; if wicked, therefore, I fear thee not; if

if good, unburthen thy wrongs, and speak to me."

Slowly the figure bowed its head; then raising its robed arm, beckoned him.

Dauntless the knight followed its steps, the same light still flitting before them. They traversed vaulted halls, spacious chambers, and mounted noble flights of steps

. still the figure waved him forward with courteous motion. They entered a dreary passage; having wound through its intricate mazes, the knight still following, descended a flight of steps; a door flew open, and the female led him into a magnificent but long-neglected chapel; it made a halt in the centre of the grand aisle. The pavement trembled beneath his feet; a stone slowly moved aside, when an iron grating appeared, which the knight having removed, the figure led him to a dreary dungeon. Here it

paused, and, groaning, pointed to the earth. The knight following the motion of its hand, beheld extended on the ground a mouldering headless corse!

He shuddered at the sight; raising his eyes, he started back—the spectre had withdrawn its hitherto-encircling veil. The knight groaned—he remembered the pallid countenance before him—it was his destined bride, the lily-cheeked Monzaga, whom he had vainly sought, full two long years!

Her beauteous neck was gashed around, and from the gaping wound a purple stream seemed issuing!

Prostrate fell the knight; his soul was torn with anguish.—“Is this Monzaga?—is this my love?” did he exclaim. “What barbarous hand could strike thy neck so fair? Oh! thou wert once thin as the spiral poplar! thy motion was graceful as the willow, bending over the bosom of streams! soft were thy golden locks, as swan’s downy bosom; thy blue
eyes

eyes beamed chastity, like night's silver orb! Fairest was thou of lilies—sweetest was my Monzaga—most virtuous among women!”

The spectre cast its deadened eyes with seeming pity on the knight—a sigh escaped its bosom. He could not refrain; he arose—his arms were open to clasp the shadow of his still-adored Monzaga. Suddenly a chilly tremor ran through his veins, hollow groans, piercing shrieks, and dismal yells, resounded through the vault, the earth trembled—the chapel clock tolled one—the spectre vanished.

The knight was left in total darkness. He smote his noble bosom—against his breast he placed the sharp-edged steel—he would have pierced his throbbing heart, but felt his arm withheld. Again a gleam illumined the dungeon walls, on which a blood-coloured cross appeared. He dropped the weapon, and

sought by prayer to appease Heaven's vengeance for the rash attempt.

Again the dungeon was obscured in gloom. The knight felt comfort; his offering was received; the hand of Heaven was upon him.

“ Yet, why did she fly me ?” exclaimed he—“ why leave me like the fleeting chaff borne on the winged winds ? I am among men the child of sorrow ; grief and melancholy are my sisters, and thy damp grave, Monzaga, is now my dwelling.” Adown his gorget rolled the dewy tears. “ Never more will the moss-banked fountain hear me sigh forth my love : never more shall my proud steed bear me against the foe. I'll watch thy tomb, Monzaga ; thy bones shall rest in peace ; no chilling breeze shall nip the budding flower. I will protect the hallowed turf. By night I'll watch the coming of thy airy form, till death's chill hand shall dim my sight for ever. Oh ! my spirit soon
will

will join thee, love: one bank shall mark our graves."

Long did the knight pause; his heart with difficulty bore the conflicting pangs that wrung it. Suddenly his cheek reduced; his dark eyes glared terribly.

"Where, where," cried he, "is the detested monster?—where is the murderer of my love? give him to my vengeance: though he be cased in adamant, this arm shall tear forth his grimed heart, and give his soul to endless torture."

He rushed from the dungeon, and soon gained the chapel. Swift as lightning he traversed each lonely hall and desolate chamber. He mounted the lofty battlements, his voice still echoing Monzaga's name, and calling for the murderer of his love.

He once more entered the dear hall where first the spectre had appeared; he recollected the spot, and threw himself upon the cold pavement. Soon he heard

the clatter of distant arms. He arose : a waving light proceeded from the grand oak staircase. He approached the portal of the hall—he started back with horror—the black-plumed knight appeared, bearing the withered head of the lily-hued Monzaga. The dreadful murderer looked terribly upon the youth, and then moved slowly onward towards the chapel. The virtuous knight remained transfixed to the spot.

At length he drew forth his battle-axe, and rushed impetuously after the destroyer of his love.

He gained the dungeon, at the moment when the sable villain vented curses on Monzaga, and gloried in the atrocity of his guilt.

“Wretch ! have I found thee ?” vociferated the virtuous youth.

The black knight, with contemptuous look, eyed him awhile.—“Begone,” at length he cried ; “stripling avault, or soon thy fleeting spirit, ebbing with
thine

thine heart's blood, shall join Monzaga's wandering ghost."

Rage nerved the youth's arm; he struck his target, in token of defiance, then furious made towards his foe. Dreadful was the contest; love fired the virtuous youth—hatred boiled in the black bosom of the gigantic knight. Soon their iron-knobbed targets shivered beneath their sturdy blows; their weapons became entangled; they wrestled; each relinquished his battle-axe, and from his girdle drew his well-tempered glaive. The contest commenced with redoubled violence; either felt the blood trickle from his wounds. They closed, and in that moment each received in his bosom the death-dooming steel.

The knight of the sable plume died, groaning forth execrations. The virtuous youth sunk by the ashes of his love, and sighing forth her name, expired.

Frantic, the spirit of these lovers haunt at midnight the drear courts of Gonda. Lashes of ever-burning iron in their hands they bear; swift through each hall and chamber they drive the wicked spirit of the sable knight, and thus torment him till the toll of one. Then they drop their ardent weapons; their features resume their wonted sweetness; reclining on a faint beam of the silvery moon, they mount to regions of ethereal bliss.

Lady, their bones are now at rest. A rose and lily spring upon the sod that wraps their mortal dust. A rippling brook bubbles hard by. Two doves have taken shelter in the overhanging wood, and every night the chaste bird warbles his melodious melancholy strain. Sometimes you may view them gliding o'er the turf, like the thin vapour on the bosom of unruffled waters; but like the dew-sipping sunbeam, they vanish at the approach of morn.

My

My soul adores thee, most tender of thy sex. Thou art lovely as Monzaga; may thy knight prove as true, but may thy name ne'er find a place in Misery's page! may thy spirit, like hers, wrapt in a silver ray, move upwards with the airy form of him thou lovest!"

Cazini closed the book; various ideas crowded on his fancy, which totally occupied him for some hours: they at length arrived at the place of their destination.

The carriage slowly proceeded through several noble streets, and stopped at a mansion; here they alighted, and were conducted into a small but elegant apartment. During some time, the same sullen behaviour was observed by the marchese and Felippo. Giuseppe at length requested to be made acquainted

with the name of the city wherein they had taken up their residence.

“ You are now in Florence,” returned his father ; “ you breathe the same air as the hateful viper that seduced your mother. ’Tis here you must avenge your own and your father’s injuries ; and ’tis here you, and you alone, must be acquainted with the cause of this hasty change of situation.”

He then, after a conversation of considerable length, in which the violent emotions of his breast were visible, made Giuseppe acquainted with a circumstance that gave him the utmost pain. In a few days after, the marchese and Felippo disappeared, their residence being known only to Giuseppe, who was enjoined to maintain the strictest secrecy. His father, with unremitting care, continued to inculcate the doctrine of revenge—spies were sent to watch the
duca’s

duca's motions. His journey to the castello di Valdarno was adjudged by the marchese to be a fit opportunity. The sequel of Giuseppe's attempt has been already explained.

CHAP. II.

A fury crawl'd from out her horrid cell,
The bloodiest minister of death and hell ;
Huge full-gorg'd snakes on her lean shoulders hung,
And death's dark courts with their loud hissings rung.
Her teeth and claws were iron, and her breath,
Like subterranean damps, gave present death.
Flames, worse than hell's, shot from her bloody eyes,
And fire and sword eternally she cries.
Horror, till now the ugliest shape esteem'd,
So much outdone, a harmless figure seem'd.
Envy, and hate, and malice, blush'd to see,
Themselves eclips'd by such deformity.
Her fev'rish thirst drinks down a sea of blood,
Not of the impious, but the just and good.

BLACKMORE.

DURING the space of ten days Maddalena Rosa was again twice summoned before the table of the Holy Office. Her answers to the several interrogatories were similar to those she had already deposed.

The

The conte Marcello was also re-examined, at two separate times, by the inquisitors. They exhorted, they threatened, and used every art they could invent, to draw from him a confession of the secret ; but he either answered as he had before done, or remained silent, when they questioned him on any subject connected with his oath.

During the days that intervened between each examination, the conte was repeatedly visited in his dungeon, either by an inquisitor, a Dominican monk, or one of those despicable wretches known by the name of Bargellos, who, under the specious and pretended garb of friendship, and seeming pity for the miserable sufferer's fate, artfully insinuate themselves, to draw from him a full confession.

Sometimes these monsters assume the garb and appearance of a fellow-captive ;

tive; sometimes they title themselves high in office, and that their power can free persons accused before this tribunal; at others, they seem to feel a particular interest in the fate of him, from whom they would draw the truth, and that their compassion prompts them to undertake this kind office. These detested hypocrites will even weep, and call profanely on Heaven to witness how much they sympathize in the prisoner's woes. They will allege, that the supreme inquisitor is some near relative, and a man whose soul abounds with charity; and that, by then privately confessing his crime, he will receive absolution, and be immediately freed from his prison. If, by any of these arts, the unsuspecting criminal be led to divulge the truth, a secretary is always placed at the door of the dungeon, who carefully notes down every word the prisoner thus inadvertently utters.

Such

Such arts did not operate upon the conte's mind. On the appearance of these subtle adherents to the cause of religion, he remained silent, nor once deigned to answer a single question. Wearied out, at length, with fruitless endeavours, the hypocrites left the dungeon, intreating the conte would remember them, should he stand in need of a friend.

Several days elapsed after the conte's third interrogatory, during which period he remained unmolested in his cell, till he was one night awakened by the appearance of two officials, who commanded him to rise and follow them. They slowly quitted the dungeon, at the door of which, one of his conductors took a torch from the gaoler, and proceeded onwards. The conte followed, and the other official after him.

They traversed several gloomy passages,

sages, no otherwise illuminated than by the flambeau which the official bore, and the chilling dampness of the place greatly diminished the effect of the light. They descended a long winding staircase, and again proceeded along several passages more damp than the former. They then arrived at a small door, where a familiar appeared. The glare from the torch struck full upon his countenance, which, contrasted with the dingy garments he wore, gave him a peculiar air of ferocity. He fixed his dreadful eyes scowlingly on the conte's visage, and, in a loud voice, exclaimed—"Who is it ye conduct?"

The official, who preceded Marcello Porta, replied—"One who is irrevocably lost, if grace enlighten not his soul. May the last efforts of our sacred tribunal reclaim his obduracy!"

The familiar crossed himself, and opened the door.

As

As the conte passed the threshold, he received a blow on the shoulder. He hastily turned, when the officer cried aloud—"Remember Him who was reviled for our transgressions, and let the recollection teach thee to repent!"

They then entered a spacious vault, from which branched numerous avenues, in every direction. The conte's ear was assailed with most dismal groans and shrieks, that pierced his inmost soul. His blood recoiled; a chilly moisture bedewed his frame, and his trembling limbs almost refused their office!

The familiars, as if to increase his emotion, made a halt for some moments. They at length moved forwards, and entered one of the narrow passages; the dreadful cries still continued! Now they died away in distance. The official suddenly extinguished the light,
and

and every thing was involved in utter darkness.

At the same instant a loud noise was heard. The conte paused, and a death-like silence ensued. Some moments elapsed, when, summoning resolution, he called aloud to his conductors; but the receding echo alone interrupted the stillness that surrounded him.

He remained a considerable time in this situation, when, on a sudden, his arms were seized, and he was forcibly hurried along the avenue. A door was thrown open, and the conte found himself in a square vault, the walls of which were hung with black, and illuminated by four lamps, placed at each angle.

Opposite the side by which the conte entered, stood a table, at which were seated the grand inquisitor, the secretary, and the inspector. Four men, remarkably

ably tall of stature, stood, with folded arms, on either side of the table; they were habited in garments of black linen, tied round the middle with a thick rope of red twisted worsted. The dress was so contrived, as to cover the feet; their faces were likewise concealed by a cowl, in which were two small cavities to admit the light. These familiars, resembling demons, whose office it was to torture, inspired the conte with momentary horror. On the pavement were several instruments and ropes, of various dimensions; large pulleys were fixed to the ceiling and walls of this chamber, and the cords, that were suspended from these, were clotted with blood. There appeared more than a dozen entrances to this vault of slaughter.

The conte was ordered to approach the table, and he silently obeyed.

“ You have particularly experienced
the

the lenity of this tribunal," said the supreme inquisitor, addressing him, "for you have been thrice summoned before us; we have used exhortation, and absolved you from the oath. Some of our brothers, steadfast in the faith, and full of charity, have kindly visited you in your dungeon; notwithstanding which, we still find you callous to all their arguments: you refuse our proffered mercy, and thereby compel us to pursue those measures which we would willingly forego. The crime, Marcello Porta, wherewith you stand accused, is of the most flagrant nature: the act itself you have freely confessed, but deny the alleged manner and reason for doing that act. First, it being adduced, that through Maddalena's interest, you obtained admittance; secondly, that your visit was to converse and forcibly convey a boarder from the convent—both which accusations you contradict. But, when I demand the proof of your innocence,

nocence,

nocence, the answers you give are vague and unsatisfactory. You assert, that there are secret enemies, who plot your ruin; and yet refuse to divulge their names: you swear that you are guiltless, and, though empowered by this tribunal, will not confute the accusations brought against you. What inference can be drawn from such answers, but that the whole is a fabrication, and base attempt to impose on your judges? for your guilt is established beyond a doubt. You love Maddalena Rosa, and if your suggestions were true, you subject her to punishment, by your contumacy. A villain would not act thus towards the object of his affection; how much less should the noble Marcello Porta? An inquisitor may not be altogether unacquainted with those passions which agitate the bosom of him who loves: he feels enraptured, when, in the presence of her he loves, the hours glide swiftly away, and he enjoys an un-

interrupted

interrupted state of bliss. If necessity, for a short period, call him from her presence, what are his emotions at parting, and his feelings during the term of absence! But, should calamity assail, or sickness endanger her life, with what tenderness he strives to alleviate her cares! or will he not, in the agony of grief, freely offer up himself a sacrifice to prolong the term of her existence? and yet you, Marcello Porta, pretend to love—you behold the object lingering in a dungeon—her life endangered—and, what to a lover must be far more precious, her honour accused. You are the cause of these sufferings; and, though enabled to release her, refuse it on a false punctilio of honour. Is such a conduct compatible with love? No—it argues flagrant guilt; for a lover would never act with such hardened cruelty and injustice.”

A look of disdain marked the features

tures of the inquisitor as he spoke, and his eyes were contemptuously bent on the conte, who had listened to the latter part of this address with the greatest astonishment.—“ And is it, then, possible,” did he mentally exclaim, “ that an ecclesiastical judge, in the performance of his function, will thus delineate the emotions of the tenderest passion !”

The conte was unmindful, that those who undertake the supreme inquisitorial office must, in the one hand, grasp the poisoned bowl, the dagger, and flaming brand, and, in the other, bear the specious mark of pity, to veil their deceit and inward depravity.

One of the doors of the vault was shortly after opened, when a friar of the Dominicans entered, accompanied by that inquisitor who, during the several interrogatories, had appeared so forward in criminating the conte and Maddalena.

His air was, if possible, more ferocious, and, as he took his station near the supreme judge, he frowned dreadfully upon the conte; but, turning his eyes towards the instruments of torture, a ghastly smile depicted his countenance, as he anticipated the purpose to which they would soon be applied.

“Are you, then, determined, Marcello Porta, to maintain this silence? By the bowels of compassion, we entreat you, better to weigh the consequences of such contumacious behaviour, which tends to render you more culpable in our eyes. If you are guilty of the crime, and there remains not a shadow of doubt as to the truth, confess that the alleged oath was merely a pretext to screen your conduct. Confide wholly in our mercy, and all we shall require of you in return, is wholesome penance, and sincere contrition. We would imitate the divine institutes of that sacred
Being,

Being, whose cause we are deputed to adjudge. *Misericordia* is our motto to them who seek it ; *Justitia* the reward of those whose obstinacy draws down on them the wrath of offended Heaven."

Such were the plausible arguments used to incite the conte to annul his oath ; but the meritorious conduct of this tribunal is such, that, if the inquisitors, by these specious promises, obtain a confession, they think themselves justified, if they mitigate, in the smallest degree, the rigorous punishment annexed to the crime. Thus, if the prisoner's guilt, in their eyes, merits death, they will deliver him over to the secular arm, and, in performance of their promise, entreat that one faggot, in addition to the usual number, may be added to the pile, that the culprit may the sooner be relieved from his torments ; but they take the precaution of placing it at the extremity of the fire, so that, if con-

F 2

sumed,

sumed, it affords no benefit to the wretched sufferer.

After a pause of some length, the conte, in a firm tone, thus addressed the tribunal.—“ Most holy lords inquisitors, after the determined silence I have maintained during three examinations, after the solemn manner in which I have attested my innocence, and that of Maddalena Rosa, it was my firm resolution to undergo every torture, ere I would again make answer to your interrogatories. But you now assert my guilt in peremptory terms; you allege proofs, and flagrant ones, against me; you describe a lover’s emotions, and thereby tax the purity of my conduct; but you forgot to expatiate on the theme of honour, that rigid sentiment, which alone restrains me from a confession. The passion which holds dominion over my heart, no powers of the most fertile imagination can describe; yet my honour
still

still predominates : death, I know, must be the alternative ; yet I will give my limbs to the torture, my body to the flames, that I may preserve my integrity unsullied. 'Twere better sacrifice my existence, than purchase it with ignominy."

The inquisitor, who last entered the dungeon, exclaimed, in a voice of thunder—" Why should we submit to have our holy dignity thus insulted? Let the torture be instantly inflicted."

The officials then rudely seized the conte's arms. The Dominican friar now approached him ; he painted, in strong terms, the bodily anguish he must endure, and threatened the everlasting torments that would await him in a future state : but all was ineffectual ; the conte remained unmoved.

" Will you, Marcello Porta, confess?" demanded the supreme inquisitor.

“ I am resolute,” returned the conte, “ and will maintain eternal silence.”

“ Put him to the question then,” exclaimed the judge.

The familiars, in an instant, tore off the conte’s habiliments, when a loose gown was thrown over his body. Cords encircled his wrists, which were then passed through pulleys. Again the question was put ; but the conte refused to answer.

“ You obstinately resist our entreaties, and spurn the proffered mercy ? Be then your death upon yourself, if you expire under the tortures !”

The officials drew the ropes, and the conte was suspended by his hands to the ceiling. He was, for some moments, kept in this painful situation ; a bench was then placed beneath him, which supported, for a short time, the weight
of

of his body. During this interval, a ponderous mass of lead was attached to his ancles; the bench was suddenly pushed from under him—every limb was stretched in the most dreadful manner, and he experienced unutterable agonies; yet he sustained them with fortitude—not a groan escaped his lips; for reflection told him, that he merited far greater punishment, for having once shamefully yielded to the madre's libidinous desires.

During this torture, the question was repeatedly proposed; but the conte maintained a resolute silence. In an instant, the rope was slackened, and he came with violence to the pavement. The sudden jerk dislocated every joint; the torment was too acute, and an agonized groan escaped his lips.

When the pain had, in some measure, subsided, and the conte was capable of

reflection, his thoughts recurred with dread to the torture he had just endured, and those which were to succeed it. This idea was momentary; for the recollection of *her* sufferings who had once inhabited his dungeon—the heroic fortitude of Bendetta Cazzala, came fresh to his recollection. He contemned the pusillanimity of his own conduct, in having, for a moment, yielded to the impulse of fear.—“What! shall the delicate frame of a female endure sufferings that intimidate the hardier sex?”

At that moment, the loved Maddalena's form presented itself to his fancy, and he mentally exclaimed—“Merciful powers! shall my Rosa be exposed to these torments?” The supposition almost deprived him of reason.—“No; I will break my oath; I will pass my days in ignominy; I will undergo any humiliation, rather than subject her to such cruelties.

He

He was roused from this train of ideas by the voice of the grand inquisitor. The conte opened his eyes, which had been closed till that moment, and found himself stretched upon his back on the floor. The torturers stood at his side with various instruments, ready to continue their dreadful employment. The faint light, that gleamed round the chamber, quite overpowered his senses; for the extreme perturbation of his mind had, till that instant, deadened his bodily anguish. He felt a rising sickness at his soul, which produced a chilling dew, that issued from every pore. This was succeeded by a raging fever; all moisture dried within him, and, could he have then articulated a sentence, he would have sworn to divulge the secret, in the hope of obtaining one drop of water to moisten his burning lips.

Whilst he remained in this state, the grand inquisitor several times addressed

him, but the conte was unable to answer, and incapacitated from making the least motion. That dreadful inquisitor, who had accompanied the monk into the vault, and whose outward appearance was so exactly the counterpart of his sanguinary mind, insisted vehemently, several times, that each torture should be inflicted without delay. The conte's silence he, even then, attributed to his contempt for the holy tribunal. The surgeon was summoned, who, having examined the conte, gave it as his opinion, that the concussion had been too violent, that the sufferer was then a prey to the most raging fever, and that he did not think it altogether prudent to continue the torture.

“Are you then convinced that he would expire?” demanded the same inquisitor, in an angry tone.

“I speak according to my belief,” returned the surgeon. “I think all farther

ther punishment should be remitted, though I cannot altogether assert, that the prisoner's life would be the forfeit, if it were inflicted."

"Let the officials, then, do their duty!" cried the inquisitor.

The machinations of his dark soul were visible in every feature. He had secret and powerful motives, that the conte Marcello might expire beneath his anguish, known only to himself. The officials were again preparing the instruments; the conte was already raised upon the wheel, when the grand inquisitor ordered them to desist. His eyes were, for some minutes, fixed on the conte, with an expression of mingled pity and anger, when, suddenly turning to that officer by whose command the torture was ordered to be continued, with a look of contempt, he thus addressed him—"Were this conduct compatible with mercy, I should have ima-

F 6

gined

gined, Girolamo, that you would have honoured more your holy function. You have evinced towards this offender a peculiar degree of inveteracy. You know, brother, it is but seldom that I am personally present at these scenes; but I came hither, on this occasion, to be a witness of the pangs inflicted on Marcello Porta; and it seems that my presence has been of some effect." The inquisitor, then assuming the most scornful look, and rising from his seat, pronounced these words in an elevated tone—"Yet, notwithstanding you have, in some measure, swerved from *your* duty, I will not disgrace the mercy I profess. Let Marcello Porta be immediately conducted hence," was the command that issued from his lips.

As he concluded this sentence, he quitted the vaulted chamber with a slow and dignified step. Girolamo remained, for a considerable time, absorbed in the
most

most gloomy meditations ; and when he arose to quit the chamber, rage, disappointment, and revenge, were the conflicting passions that boiled within his breast.

A week elapsed, during which period the conte was regularly attended by a surgeon, in the presence of an inquisitor ; for it is one of the laws of this merciful office, that if a culprit is unable to receive at one time each torture in succession, he is restored to health with the utmost care, in order that he may the sooner be enabled to endure them. The fever, at length, abated ; the bodily pain decreased ; and the conte was soon adjudged in a state of convalescence.

About midnight, he was again summoned from his dungeon, and conducted to the vaulted cell ; but no stratagem was this night practised to intimidate him. He found the same number of familiars :

familiars; and the supreme inquisitor, accompanied by four others, was seated at the table; one of these was Girolamo. There were also two monks, the secretary, and the inspector.

As the conte fixed his regard on the supreme judge, he could not but observe, that gentleness and pity were blended in his looks; and when he again exhorted him to repentance, his manner was not peremptory, but the reproofs were uttered in a voice mild and impressive. The conte wavered; a thousand arguments urged him to compliance, yet conscience revolted at the violation of an oath so sacred. He remained for some time in this state of torturing incertitude: he was again urged—honour at length predominated.—“I am fixed,” said he, “in my resolve, and will remain secret.”

The word was given, and the conte
was

was instantly affixed to the wall, by ropes which bound his legs and arms. The familiars were commencing the torture; but the order of the grand inquisitor stayed their proceeding.—“ ’Tis my will,” said he, “ that the punishment be for some minutes suspended. In the mean time, let Maddalena Rosa be conducted into our presence.”

At that instant a sealed packet was presented to the supreme judge, by an official, who had just entered the chamber. Having perused its contents, he arose from his seat, and, after a private conversation of some minutes with one of the inquisitors, he pronounced aloud —“ To you, brother Nicolo, I depute the management of this affair, till my return; but I charge you, let no voice compel you to swerve from the plan which I have communicated.”

On uttering these words, his eyes were bent, with an expression of anger,
on

on the countenance of Girolamo. He then quitted the vault, whilst two officials proceeded to Maddalena's dungeon.

Since the third examination, she was twice visited by the mysterious stranger, who had so much interested her by his conversations, that she had acquired additional fortitude, and her mind seemed now inspired with an heroic courage, almost supernatural.

It was past midnight, when the officials entered her cell. They found her wrapped in the most pleasing slumber, for she enjoyed, upon her lowly rushes, dreams that rarely visit the bed of down. She rose with composure, and followed the familiars with a firm step. She was led through the same dark avenues which the conte had traversed; her ears were also assailed by dreadful shrieks—she felt the rising emotions of her bosom,

som, and the tear stole adown her cheek.

Her conductors arrived at the vaulted cell, the door of which was thrown open, when the first object which presented itself was the conte Marcello, placed in the position to receive the torture. A painful sensation seized her frame; she leaned for support against the door, and was, for some time, overcome with mingled sensations of horror and surprise. Maddalena could not bear the sight, but averted her eyes towards the ground.

The conte, at her first entrance, had forgotten the ropes that bound him to the dungeon-wall, and made a violent effort to spring forwards, when the check which he received reminded him of his real situation. An agonized groan escaped him—he forcibly closed his hands, and bit his nether lip with rage and

and disappointment; then fixing his ardent gaze on Maddalena, uttered her name in convulsed accents.

“Your silence is required, Marcello Porta,” said Nicolo, addressing him. Then, raising his voice, he ordered Maddalena to approach the table. Her steps faltered, and it was with difficulty she supported herself, and then stopped before the inquisitors. At her right hand stood the torturers, on the left were two Dominican friars, and directly opposite, was the suspended conte Marcello.

Maddalena observed the numerous instruments scattered upon the pavement. She withdrew her eyes from these objects, inspiring sensations of disgust, which were but augmented, as she fixed them on the horrible countenance of Girolamo. His large eyes glared fiercely upon her; his gloomy
visage

visage was strongly marked with those violent emotions that pervaded his bosom. Now the quick blood visiting his cheeks, gave them a reddened glow : it was but momentary ; for the natural lividness of his complexion succeeding, made him appear more disgusting.

“ Gracious Heaven !” inwardly exclaimed Maddalena, “ what must be the workings of that man’s mind !—what a soul must inhabit his repulsive frame !”

Nicolo now addressed her as follows : —“ Your crime, Maddalena, is, if possible, more heinous than that of Marcello Porta ; for he would never have transgressed, if you had not interested the portress in your behalf ; notwithstanding we proffer mercy, on condition that you will divulge all you know of the vow by which Marcello Porta pretends to be bound, or prove that it is merely a fabrication to deceive us, and, if possible,

sible, screen himself from the rigorous punishment he so justly merits."

Maddalena, with composure, and in a firm tone, replied—"I am convinced, most holy lords, that Marcello Porta is involved in some oath of secresy; but every circumstance relating to the purport thereof, I protest myself totally unacquainted with."

"How then did you attain a knowledge of that circumstance?" returned Girolamo.

"That question," said Maddalena, "was explained during my first examination. 'Twas the conte himself who related the affair, when at the castello di Valdarno."

"And on what account was any mention made of this pretended vow?" demanded Nicolo.

"It was for that purpose alone Marcello Porta sought me at the castello. From the duca, my father, he had learned that I was removed from the convent
of

of Santa Maria. In vain he protested my innocence; for the proofs against me are apparently so strong, that he credited not his asseverations. The conte then determined to trace, if possible, the route I had taken, and convince me, at least, that his visit to the monastery did not appertain to myself. I lent an attentive ear to his narrative, and, conscious of my own integrity, naturally attributed his mysterious conduct to the oath in which he is involved, and yielded implicit confidence to his word."

"You persist then," said the inquisitor, "in asserting your belief, that a secret does exist, the purport of which you are a stranger to, and in denying the whole charge produced against you."

"Can I, my lords, divulge the conte's vow, or confess myself accessory to his admission, not being culpable? Is it consistent with reason that I should stain my reputation, by tacitly acknowledging myself an accessory in a fabricated

cated crime? or, can I, if tortures are inflicted, confess a secret, vested only in another's breast?"

"How are we to credit these assertions?" answered the inquisitor. "Must we place implicit confidence in your word?"

"Or think you," exclaimed Girolamo, in a threatening voice, "to be thus released from the inquisitorial power?"

Maddalena, in an elevated tone, replied—"No, my lord; while *some* have authority here, I shall, doubtless, never escape. I do not expect that my verbal assertion should be credited; no—before the Omnipotent I protest the purity of my actions. He, whose avenging arm will cut off the base oppressors of unprotected innocence, before His mercy seat I lay my cause, and will, unceasingly, allege the falsity of the charge wherewith I stand accused."

Maddalena's radiant eyes seemed inspired

spired with an angelic fire. She bent them on Girolamo's countenance. He strove, but could not resist their virtue-darting influence. He knit his brows; his quivering lips, partly open, discovered his gnashing teeth; he shrunk confounded before truth's piercing ray; and raising his hand, hastily covered his diabolical countenance, to conceal his dreadful agitation.

“Your oaths and protestations,” said Nicolo, “but render you more culpable in our eyes, being in possession of such indubitable proofs of your guilt. We shall, however, soon learn, whether or not you practically possess the heroic virtue, which, in theory, you so well know how to assume. Your heart, we know, is strongly attached to the person of Marcello Porta: you will not, doubtless, then, behold unmoved, the tortures which, even now, his body must endure, nor cease to be inflicted, till you
break

break your sullen silence. Officials," continued the inquisitor, "proceed to your duty."

The familiars had already grasped the instruments of torture, and approached the conte, to inflict the punishment.

"Hold!" cried Maddalena: "for the love of mercy, restrain awhile your hands! Gracious Heaven! what must be done?"

She fell upon her knees in a dreadful agony. The conte struggled and groaned aloud; it was not with corporal, but mental anguish, at beholding her maddening situation; for Nicolo, expecting some confession from Maddalena, had motioned them to desist. — "Speak," said he, addressing her. "Your confession will conduce to the salvation of both."

"Mercy, mercy, dread lord!" exclaimed

ed the conte; “ she cannot answer; Maddalena has nothing to confess.”

She arose: frenzy was in her look: she elevated her clasped hands to heaven, and cried, in a convulsed tone—“ Now, arise, thou Omnipotent Deity, and judge thy cause! *Confess!*” continued she, advancing to the table; “ what must I confess?”

She placed her hand on the missal, which lay before her. Maddalena’s eyes were rivetted on Nicolo’s countenance, who filled the seat of the grand inquisitor.

“ I will avow my innocence; and may the Power I serve, judge thine offences, according as the voice of truth shall now influence thy conduct!”

There was an inexpressible something in her manner, that confounded every one present. All were astonished, and

inwardly confessed, that truth alone could so forcibly operate on their minds. The inquisitor, to whom these words were addressed, was particularly struck with their energetic force. Girolamo also felt the workings of his unquiet conscience, and strove to crush its pervading influence, by mentally cursing the object that had roused it.

During some moments, a gloomy pause ensued. Nicolo, at length, broke the silence—"I will," said he, "pursue a different plan of operation, which will assuredly prove more effectual. You, Maddalena Rosa, shall undergo the torture: your agonizing shrieks shall pierce Marcello's hardened bosom, and force the secret from his lips."

The command was immediately issued—the familiars quitted the conte, and seized the delicate form of the statue-struck Maddalena—already they began

began to tear the garments from her tender limbs—already the barbarians had rent the veil, that had concealed her milk-white bosom, from which her palpitating heart was bursting. The big tears trickled down her pallid cheeks, like flaky snow, which the sun's heat dissolves upon the marble's cold and polished surface—now her long auburn hair escaped the fillet, which had negligently bound it—one hand was raised to cover her naked breast—the other uplifted, seemed to supplicate Heaven's protection.

The conte could no longer behold this scene, and exclaimed—"Barbarians! refrain your unhallowed touch: my own sufferings I could have patiently endured; but I can no longer remain unmoved—no; *I will annul my oath—I will make a full confession*, so you but spare that innocent victim."

"Hold, Marcello," cried Maddalena, roused from her lethargic state, "will

you merit my eternal hatred? will you forfeit the comfort of dying with me, and quitting these scenes of wretchedness with her you love?—will you become a dishonour to society, the scoff of those whose virtues you should emulate?—will you forfeit Heaven's mercy, rather than submit to a momentary pang on earth? for such is the lot attendant on perjury. Think not that my groans will assail you : I have practised how to live virtuously : I shall not shrink at the pangs inflicted on my mortal part—I yield myself freely, to preserve your honour uncontaminated.”

From the moment that the familiars seized Maddalena, Girolamo had experienced the most terrible agitation ; but fear was the passion that visibly predominated over his mind ; and on the conte's irresolution, his emotions were so violent, that he was on the point of quitting his seat, had not Maddalena's sudden

sudden retort withheld him. Every word she uttered seemed to reassure Girolamo, and his features partly regained their wonted character.

“ Will you confess, Marcello ?” cried the inquisitor.

The conte was silent. Again the question was repeated.

“ Shame ! shame !” cried Maddalena ; “ how I blush at your pusillanimity ! Resume your wonted courage ; be the man of honour—or live despised by her whose life you thus basely seek to purchase.”

No mind can fancy, how much less can language express, the contending feelings of the conte’s bosom ! honour, love, and fear, by turns usurped their empire. Before him stood that being, who alone could render life supportable,

surrounded by brutal wretches, prompt to inflict any punishment his silence would subject her to. His lips could free her from their power, and yet the purchase of her liberty would bring upon himself her everlasting hatred and contempt. A third time, Nicolo urged the question.

“ And does Marcello Porta, then, hesitate ?” exclaimed Maddalena ; “ do you waver between my love or detestation ?”

“ No,” cried the conte ; “ I will remain firm : my secret shall die with me.”

They exhorted him, but in vain ; his mind had, apparently, regained fresh energy. A seraphic smile beamed on Maddalena’s countenance, and she more resembled an aerial spirit, than a persecuted inhabitant of the Inquisition.

The conte’s silence doomed her to the
rack.

rack. The motion was given—the officials proceeded to their duty. They were forcibly tearing off her outward garments; the conte found that his late courage was but assumed; he wavered, his fortitude again forsook him, and he once more entreated to be heard.

“Are you then determined, and will you confess?” cried Nicolo.

After some hesitation, the conte returned—“I will confess the secret.”

A look from Maddalena petrified him, and he was on the point of recalling his words, when Girolamo, whose perturbation was before so visible, now perceiving, by the conte's emotion, his fortitude forsaking him, and that a confession would, undoubtedly, escape his lips, could no longer contain his violent agitation. He rose from his seat, and drawing a poniard from his bosom, rushed towards the conte. Maddalena flew

from the torturers, and critically seizing his arm, the hostile weapon only grazed Marcello's vest. The inquisitors had all arisen from their seats, and, by Nicolo's order, the officials seized Girolamo's person. At this juncture one of the portals of the vault was thrown open, and the supreme inquisitor appeared.

CHAP. III.

Oh, my offence is rank ! it smells to Heaven :
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't.

— — — — —
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent ;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause, where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. — — — — —

— — — — —
Oh, wretched state ! oh, bosom black as death !
Oh, limed soul ! that, struggling to be free,
Art more engag'd. SHAKESPEARE.

EVERY person was in the utmost consternation. The grand inquisitor darted a furious look on Girolamo, and resumed his seat at the table of office.—“ Let Marcello Porta be released !” were the first words that issued from his lips.

The command was instantly obeyed. In a softened voice he then remanded

Maddalena to her dungeon, and the conte was likewise conducted to his cell.

His sensations cannot be easily described; every circumstance of the late scene forcibly recurred to his mind. The unmerited insults which Maddalena had experienced wrung his susceptible heart; and the dread of what might hereafter occur made him tremble with apprehension. Now he arose to summon one of the inquisitors, that he might make a full confession; now Maddalena's threats resounded in his ear, and he quickly abandoned the thought. He shuddered at the recollection of the inquisitor's base attempt upon his life, and blessed her hand, that had so providentially warded the blow.

The conte had been long assured that some hidden motive actuated Girolamo's conduct; and of this he was now fully convinced.

convinced. He brought to mind the lenity that marked the countenance of the supreme inquisitor, on his re-entrance into the vault; and notwithstanding the dangerous predicament in which he was involved, a ray of hope seemed to dawn upon his drooping soul.

Maddalena's spirits were depressed by the late exertions in her dungeon. She offered up a prayer to Heaven, and felt reanimated.—“Yes, she had frustrated the murderous design; she had saved the life of him her soul adored.” Even the conte's irresolution did not displease her; she knew the stability of his mind, and became more convinced of the fervency of his affection, by this attempt to rescue her at the expence of his honour.

The grand inquisitor commanded Girolamo to approach, and he obeyed in sullen silence. His arms were crossed

upon his breast, and his lowering eyes were bent to the earth.—“ I demand,” said the inquisitor, “ the motive which actuated your conduct, in thus violating the vow of mercy, by which you bound yourself, on entering upon your sacred duty. Why have you interrupted a prisoner in his confession, and assumed to yourself the office of punishment ?”

After a pause, Girolamo replied—“ My patience could no longer brook the hardened obstinacy, the insolence, and contempt, with which this tribunal was loaded.”

“ And for that reason,” returned the inquisitor, “ you attempted to assassinate the object of your disgust ?”

“ I undertook the cause of offended Heaven,” answered Girolamo.

“ And is it thus you seek to merit its protection ?—was there no secret cause that instigated the act ?”

“ None,” replied he, “ save that which

which I glory in confessing, the cause of vindicating insulted religion."

The supreme inquisitor frowned terribly, and the word "hypocrite" escaped his lips.—"We shall inspect farther into this affair. In the mean time, let Girolamo be conducted hence, and closely confined in a dungeon of this prison."

With his arms still folded, and without the least change of countenance, he quitted the chamber, accompanied by the familiars.

Two days elapsed from this period. On the morning of the third, the conte Marcello and Maddalena Rosa were summoned before the table of the Holy Office, where they beheld, to their mutual astonishment, the madre Bracciano, the monk Ubaldo, and Ursula, the portress of Santa Maria. All the inquisitors, except Girolamo, were assembled; the supreme judge was arrayed in the
superb

superb habit of his office; and every thing wore an appearance of the most awful solemnity.

The conte with difficulty suppressed his agitation, on beholding the authors of his own and his Rosa's misery. Madalena likewise regarded the madre and Ubaldo with a sensation of horror. The abbess maintained her haughty dignity; she scarcely deigned to look upon the victims of her rage; nor did she appear the least awed at the dreadful tribunal, before which she stood. Her piercing eye was fixed upon the seat of the supreme judge, and a well-assumed air of conscious innocence marked her whole deportment.

The monk Ubaldo, who stood at her side, played his part with equal cunning. He fixed his regard on the conte, at his first entrance: not the smallest change was perceivable—every feature
retained

retained its wonted character. His gaze was at length turned on Maddalena. Not even the radiant truth, beaming from her countenance, could in the least discompose the well-arranged symmetry of his features.

After a solemn pause of considerable length, the grand inquisitor began as follows:—"Most holy brothers, the cause now before us is involved in a peculiar air of mystery. I have therefore summoned the accusers before us, that we may be the better enabled to decide on the merits or demerits of the accused. I have diligently examined the several parties; their evidence has been uniform, and time, place, nay, every circumstance has coincided. Yet if the mysterious secret by which Marcello Porta pretends to be bound, does really exist, the accusation against the prisoners is most base, and merits exemplary punishment."

His

His eyes were bent on the madre's features; they underwent not the least change: and Maddalena, who turned a scrutinizing glance on Ubaldo, could not discern a varying muscle.

The inquisitor then addressed the conte:—"Have you, Marcello Porta, any knowledge of the person before you?"

"I know him," returned the conte, "to be a monk of the convent of Santa Croce—his name is Ubaldo."

"Do you also know that female?" continued he, pointing to the lady abbess.

"She is the madre Vittoria Bracciano, superior of the sisterhood of Santa Maria," replied the conte.

"And who is the third person?"

"I am a total stranger to her features," continued Marcello; "nor do I recollect having ever before seen her."

"Are you alike unacquainted with
her?"

her ?” said the inquisitor, addressing himself to Maddalena.

“ No, my lord : her name is Ursula—she is portress of the convent of Santa Maria.”

The conte was ordered to approach the table. A missal was presented to him, and an oath administered, the purport of which was to confirm his last assertion respecting Ursula, who was also commanded to swear, that all her depositions respecting the bribes she had received from Maddalena, and her having admitted the conte into the convent, were true ; that she had also fled the monastery on learning the madre’s discovery of the fact ; but, touched with contrition for her fault, she had returned, and penitently confessed her crime, entreating mercy at the madre’s hands.

Ursula, without hesitation, took the oath.

The

The conte stood petrified at hearing such premeditated perjury ; and Maddalena experienced similar sensations.

The madre was next called upon.

“ When did you, Vittoria Bracciano, first behold the person of Marcello Porta ? ”

She replied in a firm tone—“ The night when I discovered him in Maddalena Rosa’s company. I never before, nor since that period, recollect having seen his person.”

The conte was astonished at the plausible manner with which she asserted this falsity, and, with difficulty, restrained his expression of surprise, when the oath was administered.

“ Now, padre,” continued the judge, “ where, and at what period, did you gain a knowledge of Marcello Porta ? ”

“ I recol-

“ I recollect seeing him,” replied the monk, “ in the great church of the convent of Santa Maria, on the morning of the Annunciation. He was also present there at evening vespers. From that day, I never beheld his person, till the time I discovered him in company with Maddalena Rosa.”

Ubaldo took the missal, and swore to these depositions.

“ What have you, Marcello Porta, to allege against the affirmations of the accusers?” said the inquisitor.

“ I confess that I was discovered by the madre and Ubaldo, as before related ; but I again deny, that my intention, in visiting the convent, was to meet, and forcibly convey Maddalena Rosa from thence. I well remember seeing the padre, as by him stated ; but the evidence of Ursula the portress is most false—I never, before this hour, beheld
her ;

her ; nor was it through her means that I obtained the alleged admission."

Every eye was directed to the countenance of Ursula ; but she had been too well tutored to betray any evident marks of guilt. Maddalena was then questioned. She related every thing, as before stated, and, lastly, contradicted, in the most positive terms, the whole of Ursula's evidence.

The supreme inquisitor then spoke as follows—" You see, brothers, that the evidences precisely correspond with those which each individual has before affirmed. The attestations of the accused differ widely from those of the accusers. The abbess and Ubaldo both assert, that the meeting was premeditated, and that Marcello's intent was to carry off the boarder ; but the most material evidence is that of Ursula, who positively swears, that she was bribed by
Maddalena

Maddalena to admit the conte; which assertions the prisoners contradict on oath. One party must therefore be guilty of the basest perjury. I am not willing to suspect the madre of the immaculate sisterhood of Santa Maria; nor can I doubt the upright character of the monk Ubaldo. Besides, what end could they have to answer, in seeking the lives of two innocents? I minutely examined the features of Maddalena and Marcello Porta; an air of truth seemed to accompany their words; nor did Ursula betray any symptoms of guilt. How can we reconcile such contradictions? If Ursula did not admit Marcello Porta, as he affirms, I demand of him, who was his conductor? and, if he went not to the convent with the alleged intent, what was the purport of his errand? I am then answered, that a most solemn oath binds him to secrecy; neither do I myself doubt the veracity of the assertion."

The

The inquisitor bent a scrutinizing glance on the abbess and the monk; but they maintained the same undaunted deportment. Turning to the portress, he addressed her as follows:—"Mercy is Heaven's greatest attribute; it is the predominant feature of this tribunal, and the duty of its ministers prompts them to adhere to its dictates. If, therefore, Ursula, you have sworn falsely, I entreat that you avow your crime; for, should you prove guilty, it is the only method you can adopt to merit our forgiveness. Think not to conceal the crime; for though guilt may flourish for a season, the time will come, when you must confess the power of truth, and meet the punishment you so justly merit. Before you, Ursula, stand two persons, accused of flagrant crimes; if guilty, your evidence justly dooms them to their fate; but, on the other hand, think what awaits you, should any untoward circumstance bring your infamy
to

to light. The rack will first draw forth a confession, and the flames afterwards consume you, for the very crimes you have divulged; or, think, should you even live undiscovered, what will be the workings of your conscience—what the agonies of your dying hour, and the torments of eternity! Weigh well these circumstances in your mind. Remember, that in three days, will be celebrated an act of faith. Imagine that you hear Maddalena's and the conte's shrieks, as the ardent flame consumes their mortal flesh, and that their fleeting souls ascend before the Throne of Mercy, heaping on your detested head the crime of murder, calling aloud for Heaven's vengeance."

During this address, the eyes of the madre and the monk were rivetted on her face; nor could they altogether conceal their inward emotions. Ursula's countenance underwent several changes,
and

and a pause of some length ensued ere she replied, during which, she banished the unpleasant thoughts that had rankled in her bosom, and firmly protested, that she appeared in the cause of truth, and had acted with integrity. Maddalena turned her eyes towards the portress—it was but a momentary glance—her soul sickened at beholding an object so depraved. The conte's regard was fixed on his Rosa—he read the workings of her bosom—they coincided with those of his own breast.

A silence ensued; during which the grand inquisitor frowned angrily, regarding, by turns, the abbess, the monk, and Ursula. Then turning to the conte, he thus addressed him—"If your oath, Marcello Porta, precludes you from divulging the manner of your entrance into the convent, is there no second person acquainted with the circumstance,

stance, who might throw some light upon the affair?"

"Those," replied the conte, "who involved me in the dreadful secret, can alone prove my innocence; and their evidence I never can expect to obtain."

"In your visit to the convent, were you ever attacked, and your life endangered?" said the inquisitor.

The conte was astonished at this question, and the madre and Ubaldo betrayed the strongest emotions.

"Yes, my lord," returned the conte, "I was assailed by three strangers: two of them fell in the contest, the third sought refuge in flight." He then produced the diamond cross, and presented it to the inquisitor. "This," continued he, "attracted my notice; it undoubtedly belonged to one of the bravoës. I have, since that period, preserved it with care, in the hope that it might,

one day, lead to a developement of the mystery."

The supreme judge examined the crucifix in silence, for a considerable time.

"You can adduce no witness then, Marcello Porta?"

The conte answered in the negative.

"I then command that the evidence for the prisoners appear."

On uttering these words, he struck the table with violence—the chamber resounded with a hollow noise. Madalena and the conte looked anxiously towards the entrance of the apartment, while a ray of hope mutually animated their bosoms.

Notwithstanding the madre's exertions to resist the strong impulse of fear, she

she visibly yielded to its influence. The colour faded from her cheeks, and her eyes lost their boldness of expression. Ubaldo no longer fixed his confident regard on the inquisitor: his head sunk upon his guilty bosom. The vile Ursula trembled with apprehension, and with difficulty supported herself under this sudden shock.

The inquisitors were themselves astonished, and every eye was bent upon the door. It was at length thrown open; when a man entered, rather above the middle stature, habited in black. Both the accusers and the accused were astonished at beholding him, his person being unknown to either party. Having made a profound reverence, he approached the table of office.

“Who are you, and what have you to allege in behalf of the prisoners?” said the supreme inquisitor.

“ My name is Pietro Granelli. I was born at Rome, but my life hath been mostly spent in this city. I come to disprove the charge of guilt brought against the prisoners. I will prove that the madre Vittoria knew the conte before she discovered him with Maddalena Rosa; that padre Ubaldo is unworthy the garment he wears; that Ursula is perjured, and not suborned by the prisoners, but by their base accusers. The duties of the monastery of Santa Croce are peculiarly rigid; I, therefore, demand of the monk, why he was absent from his convent, at the extraordinary hour, when he asserts his having discovered Maddalena and the conte in conversation. The rules of his order are, that, after the vesper-bell, he shall not be seen without the walls, unless some dying person requires the attendance of one of the fraternity. He cannot allege, as an excuse, that any nun of Santa Maria needed his presence: the sister-

hood

hood were all in perfect health : let him, then, answer my interrogatory."

Padre Nicolo was on the point of questioning the stranger, but the grand inquisitor motioned him to desist. Grannelli was silent : every eye was turned from him, upon the features of the padre Ubaldo, who stood petrified and speechless with astonishment.

"What!" resumed Pietro, "can he not reply to this question? What will he say, when I tax him with having thrice absented himself from Santa Croce at that hour? when I also accuse him of administering the oath of secrecy to the conte, and admitting him by a private door into the cloisters of Santa Maria?"

"I will deny both these charges," answered Ubaldo, roused from his lethargy.

The stranger, smiling contemptuously upon him, continued—" 'Twere better,

padre, that you make a full confession, and evince, at least, some signs of repentance."

Then turning to the abbess, whose countenance betrayed the strongest marks of horror and disappointed pride, he addressed her as follows—"Do you not remember fixing your regard upon the conte, during the morning service of the Annunciation? do you not recollect the emotions which his presence created in your bosom? did you not depute the monk Ubaldo to administer the oath of secrecy, in the private chapel dedicated to Our Lady, and then admit him to your presence?"

The madre, assuming all the firmness she was able, strenuously denied every circumstance. "But," continued she, concealing her emotions beneath a feigned smile of contempt, "if the charge were even true, how could you acquire a knowledge of the fact?"

The stranger shook his head, and replied

plied—"With me it rests to prove your guilt, and free oppressed innocence: if, therefore, I make good my assertions, it is of little consequence how I attained a confirmation of the fact. If I fail in my proofs, I expect no mercy: this tribunal will not suffer me to escape unpunished. You, Ursula," continued he, "were you not tempted to appear against the accused, through the instigations of your superior and the monk Ubaldo?"

The portress, who had but a short time before so strenuously attested their guilt, now wavered in her resolution; but shame at length prevented her from acknowledging the crime; and she still persisted in asserting her innocence.

The stranger then drew from his bosom a paper, which he presented to the grand inquisitor, who, having perused it, held conversation with padre Nicolo

for some minutes. Then regarding the abbess and her abettors, with a penetrating look, he demanded if they could controvert the accusations brought against them. They replied with firmness, that the whole was a base fabrication; and the madre, in particular, assuming the most haughty tone, alleged, that her character and situation should preclude her from being subjected to the supposition of having been guilty of an act of such atrocity.

“ True, madre,” returned the inquisitor, “ you should have been exempt from these accusations; but the proofs are too strong against you, to escape investigation.”

Here he paused, in expectation of a reply; but she maintained a sullen silence.

“ ’Twere better,” resumed he, “ that
you

you confess and confide in our mercy. To ameliorate your punishment, we accord you one night for reflection; but, if to-morrow, you do not give satisfactory proofs, that your accusations are true we shall deem ourselves justified in pursuing the most rigorous measures."

They were forthwith ordered to separate dungeons. Maddalena and the conte were also led back to their respective cells.

What varied sensations pervaded their breasts! the conte, from the behaviour of the grand inquisitor, felt assured that he was in possession of some part, if not the whole of the secret. He pictured to his imagination the period when he should be released from his dismal abode, and enjoy, with Maddalena, a state of the purest happiness. He anticipated the joy he should expe-

rience on being reconciled to the duca Bertocci's good opinion.

From Pietro's evidence, Maddalena had in part conjectured the cause of the madre's revengeful conduct, though she did not suspect that the conte had yielded to her guilty passion. She now adored, more than ever, the retributive hand of justice, and, recalling Marietta's dying words, she exclaimed—"There is indeed but one Omnipotent, in whom all power is vested. I have trusted in His mercy ; He has not abandoned me."

The madre Vittoria surveyed the dungeon, of which she was now become an inhabitant, with a look of gloomy horror, and her breast was agitated with sensations the most dreadful. She knew the rigour of this tribunal ; she was also acquainted with its duplicity, and, therefore, doubted whether the evidence of the stranger might not be an artifice of
the

the Holy Office to fathom the truth. Yet, the recollection of the coincidence of Pietro's depositions with the real facts, made her tremble lest the inquisitors had obtained proofs of the depravity of her proceedings. Nevertheless, her pride revolted at the idea of a confession, and she resolutely determined to combat every danger. Thus resolved, she sullenly awaited the mandate of the lords inquisitors.

The padre Ubaldo, after various conflicts, had formed a similar resolution ; and Ursula, already assured that a confession would avail her nothing, resolved to maintain an obstinate silence.

The ensuing morning they were each summoned to the chamber of office, where the accusers were again separately exhorted to confess ; but the grand inquisitor, finding that they still persisted in protesting their innocence, drew forth

the same paper which Pietro had delivered the preceding day, and read, in a loud voice, a circumstantial detail of every particular respecting the madre Vittoria, the conte, and the monk Ubaldo, which concluded in the following words :—

“ And I do hereby swear, in the presence of my confessor, padre Ignazio, of the convent of Santa Croce, and the abbate Pietro Alvaro, superior of the said monastery, that my confession is founded in truth ; that I was myself a witness to the facts herein contained, and sworn to secrecy ; but, touched by the pious exhortations of my ghostly father, I determined to ease my mind of this weight of guilt that oppressed me, and, by saving two innocents, endeavour to make my peace with that Omnipotent Power, I have so heinously offended. (Signed) BEATRICE,

“ Sister of the Convent of Santa Maria.”

The

The madre, the monk, and Ursula, were ready to sink with shame, on hearing this unexpected declaration of their conspiracy. Maddalena was overwhelmed with astonishment, and the conte bent his eyes to the ground.

The grand inquisitor, in a voice that showed his dreadful displeasure, demanded if they had any thing to allege in extenuation of their guilt, when they still persisted that the whole was a fabrication. He hastily rose from his seat, and summoning the familiars in a furious tone, ordered them to be conducted to the rack. They were led from the chamber, accompanied by one of the inquisitors and a secretary.

During their absence, Maddalena and the conte were desired to be seated on a selette placed for their accommodation. Marcello brought to recollection the pangs which he had experienced from
one

one torture only, and sickened at the sufferings which were then inflicting on his enemies; pity predominated over every other sensation. He arose, and petitioned the inquisitor to mitigate the rigour of their punishments; but the supreme judge soon checked his zeal. Having ordered him to remain silent, and resume his seat, he addressed him in these words:—"Although, Marcello Porta, the nun's confession has interested us in your favour, yet we cannot decide upon the cause, till we have extorted from one of your accusers a similar proof of your innocence. You have yourself been a witness, that no persuasive arguments were effectual; necessity has therefore obliged us to adopt this step."

The conte felt the full force of the inquisitor's words; and finding that his own and Maddalena's liberty could not otherwise

otherwise be obtained, bowed his head in silence to the grand inquisitor.

As he raised his eyes, they caught those of Maddalena, which had been fixed on his countenance since the reading of sister Beatrice's confession. He could not withstand her penetrating glance; his reprehensible conduct struck more forcibly than ever on his mind, and he underwent the most heart-piercing sensations.

During this period, the monk Ubaldo first underwent the infliction of torture. He confided in the madre's firm resolution, and suffered every pang, without revealing a circumstance which might tend to their crimination.

The portress was the next to suffer; she submitted, for some time, with fortitude; but on the question's being proposed a second time, she attempted
to

to speak, when her agonies were so insufferable, owing to the familiars having executed their office with such peculiar rigour, that the surgeon interfered, and she was conveyed senseless from the dungeon.

The madre Vittoria was lastly put to the question, as the inquisitors, considering her elevated station, had postponed her punishment, in the hope that a confession would have been extorted from the monk or Ursula. After the infliction of the first and second torture, her pride, every consideration yielded to the corporeal anguish she endured, and Vittoria, in a convulsed tone, requested to be heard. The inquisitor stayed the familiars ; but it was not until the question had been several times repeated, and the torturers were again ordered to do their duty, that she could be prevailed upon to divulge the truth.

Her

Her guilt being ascertained, she was supported back to the chamber of office, whither the monk Ubaldo had been previously conducted. The judge being acquainted with her confession, a pause of some moments succeeded, during which, the monk was most terribly agitated. Sometimes he darted the most threatening looks at the madre; now the keen anguish of his lacerated limbs caused a chilling moisture, that bedewed his frame; his dark soul execrated her pusillanimity, and vented the bitterest curses upon the innocents that would thus escape the deep-laid scheme, planned for their ruin.

The inquisitor, having expatiated on the heinousness of the crime, pronounced the following sentences—" You, madre Vittoria Bracciano, have been guilty of a crime, which merits death; but your confession has evinced some signs of repentance: we therefore doom
you

you to the following punishment:—You shall be deprived of your dignity, before all the sisterhood of Santa Maria, and in their presence, make a full declaration of your guilt. You must then travel barefoot to the convent of penitents at Rome, where we shall previously give orders for your reception. There, on the first Friday in every month, you shall be whipped on your bare shoulders, by one of the lay-sisters, bearing a rod of thorns. You shall not be permitted to take refreshment at the table with the rest of the nuns, but publicly eat off the pavement; and you shall for ever be subject to the most menial offices of the lay-sisters. We farther order, that you never more cover yourself with the sacred veil; and that you abstain, during three days in every week, from all kind of animal food, partaking only of bread and water; and lastly, during the mid-day repast, you shall, bareheaded, and on your knees,
in

in presence of all the community, pronounce aloud the guilty deed for which you were thus degraded.

“ You, padre Ubaldo, of the convent of Santa Croce, having, with obduracy, persisted in concealing your villainy, and scorned that mercy which you might have otherwise obtained, shall be first stripped of the sacred vestments of your order, and in three days, attend at the solemnization of the act of faith : we shall there deliver you over to the secular arm, which will, doubtless, condemn you to the flames, that your guilty soul may be everlastingly tortured for the crimes you have endeavoured to perpetrate.

“ We condemn Ursula, should she survive the torture which has been inflicted, to a similar fate.

“ And, whereas Marcello Porta stands accused with sacrilegiously entering the convent of Santa Maria, intending to carry off a boarder from that community,

nity, we have, as our holy office requires, charitably examined the charge, and find the second part disproved: but the first being established, though with some alleviating circumstances in Marcello's favour, we, considering his imprisonment, and the punishment already inflicted, do sentence him to be brought privately, for the avoiding scandal to the holy sisterhood, and demand pardon and absolution from the Holy Office for his past offence; he, the said Marcello, also paying one thousand crowns, as a charitable donation for the redemption of captives; and causing thirty masses to be said in the private chapel of Our Lady, having first presented its holy patroness some costly relic, in token of his gratitude, as, through her mediation, his innocence has been established. And as it has been clearly proved that you, Maddalena Rosa, are in no way implicated in the charge brought against you, we honourably acquit you of the same,

your

your accusers being hereby declared infamous, and their crimes cognizable by this Holy Office ; and we hereby order that you be freed from farther imprisonment, and that you be delivered, without delay, to the duca, your noble father."

At the conclusion of this sentence, the inquisitor ordered the madre and the monk Ubaldo to separate dungeons ; and a messenger was instantly dispatched to the Bertocci palace, to acquaint the duca with the welcome news, and prepare him to receive his beloved daughter.

In the course of a few hours, after having received the torture, the wretched Ursula made a confession of her guilt, and expired, being thereby saved from the dreadful end to which she was doomed by the inquisitorial office.

The pangs of death would have been
bliss,

bliss, compared to those torments which the madre endured. Sometimes she cursed herself for having yielded to the agonies of the moment, and divulged her crime. Now she painted the degrading punishment which she was doomed to suffer. Her soul revolted at the idea, and a momentary thought of self-destruction flashed across her maddened brain; but the vengeance of offended Heaven suddenly checked her guilty purpose. Even the proud abbess of Santa Maria shrunk from the idea of an avenging Deity.—“No,” she cried; “I may, by this debasement and after-repentance, merit forgiveness. What would be my lot, if, loaded with my present crime, I were to perpetrate the dreadful sin of self-murder, and rush, unprepared, into the presence of my heavenly Judge?”

In the evening she was conducted to the convent of Santa Maria, where the first part of her sentence was put into execution;

execution ; and that night, accompanied by officers of the Inquisition, she commenced her painful pilgrimage to the convent of Penitencia at Rome.

The monk Ubaldo at first gloried in the fortitude he had evinced, under the tortures that had been inflicted. He despised the conduct of the madre Vittoria, and deemed the inherent perverseness of his disposition a virtue ; but when left to his private meditations, experienced all the horrors of his situation. The dreadful death to which he was doomed, terrified his guilty conscience ; the scenes of his past life recurred to his imagination ; and after a night spent in the most dreadful agonies, he determined to summon the duca Bertocci, and, by divulging a secret which materially concerned him, endeavour to conciliate the duca, and thereby, if possible, procure a mitigation of the sentence which had been passed.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

—————prepare to hear
A story that shall turn thee into stone.
Could there be hewn a monstrous gap in nature,
A flaw made thro' the centre by some god,
Through which the groans of ghosts might strike thy
ears,
They would not wound thee as this story will.

LÆE.

.....

Joy is in ev'ry face, without a cloud ;
As, in the scene of op'ning Paradise,
The whole creation danc'd at their new being,
Pleas'd to be whatthey were, pleas'd with each other.

DRYDEN.

It is now necessary to account for the motive which induced sister Beatrice to make the unexpected confession which so providentially saved the lives of the conte and Maddalena Rosa.

The reader will recollect, that, in the
short

short sketch which was given of her life, she had placed her affections on a youth of Naples, whose parents would joyfully have united their son to her, in consideration of her wealth, though well assured that his affections were pre-engaged.

On being made acquainted with the true state of his heart, Beatrice determined to revenge what she deemed the most flagrant injury, and, by persons whom she had employed for the purpose, gained a knowledge of the name of her rival, which was signora Isabella, the same that had, under the feigned name of Giacinta, entered the convent of Santa Maria.

Beatrice's first effort was against the life of her rival ; but being frustrated in her design, she had planned those measures, the execution of which had brought

such unmerited affliction on the unfortunate Isabella.

Signor Frederigo having at that time incurred the displeasure of his parents, by refusing Beatrice's hand, was, through their rigorous treatment, compelled to quit Florence; and it was then that Beatrice's father learned from the stranger, who had been closetted with him, the detested machinations of his daughter, which was the cause of his conveying her so precipitately to Florence, and condemning her for ever to a monastic life.

From this period, Beatrice had remained within the walls of Santa Maria, a total stranger to every circumstance which had transpired, respecting the object of her hatred, and the youth who had, so unfortunately for himself, inspired her with a tender attachment. The receipt of the letters before mentioned

tioned had revived her hopes, and caused the extraordinary change in her conduct. It came from her mother; who, after acquainting her with her father's death, conveyed the pleasing intelligence, that Frederigo was returned to Florence, and under the firm belief that Isabella was now no more, had, to obtain his father's forgiveness, promised to unite himself to Beatrice, could her vows be annulled; for which purpose interest was then making at Rome. By this letter she also learned that Giacinta, who had lately taken refuge in the convent of Santa Maria, was no other than her rival Isabella; that the greatest caution was necessary to conceal this truth from Frederigo, and strengthen his belief of her death.

Beatrice meditated at first the most dreadful schemes against Isabella; but she soon abandoned these ideas, and determined to act with subtlety, and for

that purpose, Beatrice changed her line of conduct; she pretended to be highly interested in the fate of Giacinta, and by her insidious conversations, endeavoured to inspire her with a love of a monastic life. The change was too sudden not to alarm Isabella, who was, consequently, guarded in her manner, and slow in crediting these specious appearances.

About a week after the arrival of the first letter, Beatrice again received an express from Naples. She anxiously perused the contents, not doubting but they contained the intelligence of her being released from her monastic vow, and that messengers would soon arrive, to conduct her from Florence. What was therefore her disappointment at finding that all their efforts had proved abortive, his holiness having refused to free her from her vow of celibacy! It was with difficulty she concealed the
dreadful

dreadful conflict of her mind, which this unlooked-for refusal occasioned. A thousand times, she cursed the memory of her deceased father, who had thus doomed her to a monastery; nor was she sparing of her invectives against the sovereign pontiff, who might have freed her from her irksome bondage. Sometimes she planned an escape from Santa Maria; but the horrid punishment attendant on this crime, should she be discovered, deterred her from putting that measure into execution: she at length thought of an expedient.

From the duca Bertocci's frequent letters to the madre Vittoria (all of which she had been made acquainted with), it was evident that he suffered most poignant affliction on Maddalena Rosa's account. Beatrice, therefore, made him acquainted with the whole affair, on condition that he would obtain a promise from the inquisitor to grant

the request which she should make. She immediately dispatched a billet to the Bertocci palace, the purport of which was as follows :—

“ *To the Duca Bertocci.*

“ A stranger, well acquainted with the very dangerous predicament in which signora Maddalena Rosa is now involved, and who is pitying the sufferings of a fond parent, makes a voluntary offer of *his* services. The writer of these lines will free your daughter from the inquisitorial power, on one condition :— You must obtain a solemn promise from the supreme inquisitor, that I shall be released from a vow by which I am bound, and from which his power can exonerate me. If you succeed with the inquisitor, your answer must be deposited in a niche behind the fifth column of the centre aisle of the Grand Church of Santa Maria. I shall rely on your honour,

honour, being sufficiently acquainted with the integrity of your character.

“*****”

The duca, whose mind was tortured with apprehension, had frequently visited the convent, to entreat an interview with the madre. His attendance on the grand duke had been unceasing, and his petitions frequent to the inquisitor. Every effort had proved ineffectual—he remained a total stranger to his daughter's fate.

On the receipt of this letter, he was struck with mingled pleasure and astonishment, as he doubted not of obtaining from the inquisitor a fulfilment of the condition mentioned in the anonymous letter. He repaired, without delay, to the grand duca, who was no sooner acquainted with its purport, than he personally accompanied the duca

Bertocci to the palace of the supreme inquisitor, who, after a short consultation, gave the duca a sacred promise, that the writer should be freed from his vow.

Having gained this necessary point, he wrote an answer to the letter in question; and that very evening, at vespers, placed it in the appointed spot.

Beatrice, when all the convent were retired to rest, descended into the church, and found the expected answer. Rejoiced at the happy issue of her project, she the following morning divulged the secret to her confessor Ignazio, and, after acquainting him with the purport of her letter to the duca, she requested his advice.

The matter was of the greatest import, and the monk thought it necessary to acquaint the padre abate with the whole

whole affair, who, in consequence, secretly attended the nun, and took down a circumstantial detail of the madre's proceedings. This Beatrice signed. The abate immediately carried it to the palace of the inquisitor, who being then on duty in the prison of the Holy Office, he proceeded thither, and, by one of the officials, sent a billet, which the grand inquisitor received in the dungeon of torture, as before mentioned. It contained an earnest entreaty, on the part of the abate, that he would, for a few minutes, quit his duty, on a matter of the utmost importance. He obeyed the summons, deputing padre Nicolo to continue the torture on Maddalena and the conte.

Having heard Beatrice's confession, which, if true, established the assertion in the mysterious letter sent to the duca Bertocci, he hastily descended into

the vault, and pursued the steps already related.

The person who pretended to accuse the abbess, was one of the servants of the Inquisition, expressly tutored as to the measures he should pursue; for Beatrice had particularly requested that her name, if possible, might remain concealed.

After having passed the sentences mentioned at the conclusion of the last chapter, by the inquisitor's order, Beatrice was brought before him. He minutely interrogated her, and from the answers, learned that she had been deeply involved in the madre's villainous schemes. He also drew from her a confession that she had been bound by an oath of secrecy, administered by the monk Ubaldo; when he, shortly after, commanded her to make known the vow, from which she so much wished to
be

be absolved. Beatrice joyfully obeyed, and confessed her desire of being totally freed from her monastic engagement.

At the conclusion of her speech, a silence of some minutes ensued, during which the inquisitor eyed her with a look of mingled anger and contempt. He at length addressed her as follows—
“ When the duca Bertocci applied to me concerning your anonymous letter, I gave him a solemn promise that the writer thereof should receive a dispensation from *his* vow. You, doubtless, penned the letter as from a man, in case my consent had not been obtained, you might have escaped detection ; by that artifice you have involved yourself; my promise not being given to one of the female sex, is, of course, void. You stipulated a release from a vow, but not a release from the punishment due to your many offences. The ardent desire which you evince of being absolved

from your oath of celibacy, more fully proves that you are still actuated by the same spirit of Satan and the world, and that the confession of your atrocious deeds was not dictated by real compunction and true repentance. Your crime, therefore, in our eyes is rather heightened than diminished, and the most rigorous penance can alone expiate your faults. We shall, notwithstanding, free you from one detested oath, being that which you freely entered into with Vittoria Bracciano and Ubaldo; but we order you to be removed to the convent of the Ursulines in this city, where the strictness of their rule may tend to better your bad life, and lead you to salvation."

Beatrice was then, by order of the inquisitor, led from the chamber; she now cursed the measure she had pursued; but execrations were vain; she was, that very evening, removed according

ing to her sentence, and compelled to enter on the rigid penance which the rules of the convent ordained.

The duca Bertocci received the joyful news of his daughter's innocence being ascertained, and that she would be restored to him from the prison of the Inquisition. He instantly repaired thither, and was admitted into her presence. But what words can express the fond father's raptures, or the exquisite feelings of the lovely Maddalena Rosa! A thousand times he pressed her to his paternal bosom, and she as oft returned his affectionate embrace. She was overcome by the ecstatic bliss of the moment.

Her tumultuous sensations in some degree subsiding, she was led to the carriage by the duca, and soon arrived at the Bertocci palace, to the great joy of the

the domestics, who, with tears and exclamations, welcomed her return.

Notwithstanding the duca's efforts to prevent it, the confinement of his daughter and the conte had, for some time, been the general topic of conversation at Florence, and the happy tidings of her liberation, and being freed from the least stain of guilt, was now spread with incredible rapidity. The courtyard of the duca's palace was, in a short time, surrounded with carriages. The grand duca himself visited Bertocci. Every person rejoiced unfeignedly in his happiness. Among the rest, the signor Viviani was announced, who now learned, to his inexpressible joy, that the conte's innocence was also proved, and that his friend would soon revisit the world.

The faithful Gerardo also attended, to ascertain the truth of what rumour had

had conveyed to his ear. From the duca's domestics he learned, that their young mistress was already liberated from the prisons of the Holy Office, and that he would soon behold the person of his master. With these glad tidings he flew back to the mansion of the conte, where the excessive joy he testified on the occasion, soon made the servants comprehend the certainty of his approaching liberation.

At a late hour in the evening, the duca received a message from the grand inquisitor, requesting his attendance, for a short period, at the prison of the Inquisition. He instantly obeyed the summons, and was shewn into his presence. The grand inquisitor then gave into the duca's hand a letter, addressed to him. The seal had been already broken : it was written by the monk Ubaldo, and contained an earnest entreaty,
on

on his part, that the duca would repair to his prison, as he had a circumstance to relate, which greatly interested him.

After having perused it, the inquisitor informed the duca, that in case a culprit solicited permission to write to any individual, his wish was instantly complied with—"Because," continued he, "it may chance to contain, in part, a confession of his guilt, or prove some circumstance hitherto concealed: such epistles are always brought for my perusal."

The duca then requested to be made acquainted with his decision concerning the letter in question.

"I would," returned the inquisitor, "that you now visit the prisoner, and learn the secret he has to divulge. A secretary will be placed near at hand, to
note

note down every syllable he utters. Let me only entreat that you interrupt him not—neither give him the least hope of mercy.”

Having acquiesced in this desire, the duca was conducted by an official to the dungeon of the monk Ubaldo. On opening the doors, he beheld him, with downcast eyes and a look of despair, pacing the narrow limits of his damp abode.

“ I have obeyed your summons, padre,” said the duca, “ and will lend an attentive ear to any circumstance which you may have to relate.”

“ Will you likewise, after having heard, temper your passion with mercy ?” returned the monk, visibly agitated.

“ It is not in my nature,” said the duca, “ to be uncharitable, therefore proceed ;

ceed ; from me you have nothing to dread."

" But if the affair greatly interests yourself, will you forgive me for the agonies I have already made you suffer, on your daughter's account, and exert yourself to obtain a mitigation of the dreadful death which I am doomed to suffer ?"

" For myself," answered the duca, " I freely pardon the past offence, of which you have been guilty, and pity your dreadful situation. I will even use my endeavours to soften the rigour of your punishment, though almost convinced that my attempts will prove ineffectual."

" Oh Heavens !" exclaimed Ubaldo, in an agony, " how exalted now appears the virtuous character ! how debased is mine !"

He traversed the dungeon for some minutes in the most terrible agitation. He struck his breast with violence several times, and his whole frame seemed
torn

torn with the contending emotions of his bosom. He suddenly stopped, and after fixing his eyes for some time on the duca's countenance, raised them upwards, and cried aloud—"Merciful Heaven, I thank thee! for I have it in my power to make some retribution."

After a short pause, during which he had used his utmost endeavours to compose the perturbation of his soul, he addressed the duca as follows:—"Do you remember the name of the marchese Ferdinando Monti?"

After a moment's pause, the duca answered in the affirmative.

"Do you recollect, that he abandoned your society, being refused a post at court, which the grand duca bestowed upon yourself?—that he quitted Florence, and has never since been heard of?"

"Your mention of the affair has brought

brought it fresh to my recollection," said the duca.

"The marchese," continued Ubaldo, "was stung to the soul at the preference the grand duca had shown you. He possessed the most violent passions, and, in the bitterness of his rage, swore eternal hatred to you and your house. With this determination, he repaired to the vicinity of the mansion of Julio Serassi, who then had charge of your son; and at the close of each evening, watched an opportunity of surprising him. Within the course of a few days, his wish was gratified. By his direction, I seized the trembling Julio, on his return home; for in me you behold the signor Felippo, brother to the marchese Monti."

The duca Bertocci started.

"My brother," continued Ubaldo, "then drew from his bosom a dagger, and,

and, by the threats of instant death, extorted a terrible oath from Julio, by which he bound himself to deliver your son into the marchese's hands that very night, and, within two days, send you word that your child suddenly expired !”

“ Did he, then, murder my child ?” exclaimed the duca, in convulsed accents.

The monk continued—“ At midnight, your son was placed in my arms ; my brother instantly dispatched me, with his prize, to a mansion which he had expressly purchased, in a remote part of the Italian States, while he continued near Julio's mansion, to observe the conclusion.

“ Some weeks elapsed ere he joined me. On his arrival, I learned that you had been prevented from continuing the journey you had commenced, by meeting, on the road, Julio's express, which made you acquainted with the
supposed

supposed loss of your son, who, he informed you, had died of a fever so malignant, that the immediate interment of his remains had been deemed essential; that the event had affected you so much, as to cause a dreadful illness, which had endangered your life; and my brother concluded by informing me, that Julio Serassi had expired, which event, he said, precluded all idea of any future discovery.

“ I firmly credited this assertion, till, one night, awakening from a dreadful vision, which had greatly agitated me, as I lay revolving in my mind the circumstances of my dream, the sound of footsteps struck my ear. I listened, and sometimes heard indistinctly the tones of my brother’s voice. I was astonished to hear him at such an unusual hour. Curiosity prompted me to listen. I rose, and approached the door which communicated with his chamber, and through a crevice beheld him : he seemed in great agitation,

agitation, and, at length, exclaimed—
‘ Why are my dreams disturbed? Why does the pale form of Julio haunt thus my nightly visions? And must I never more enjoy repose? What is murder, that it should thus agitate the frame, and unnerve the strongest mind? Am I but an infant, that my limbs should tremble thus at unreal fantasies?’

“ The marchese then paced his chamber for some time in silence, and, at length, threw himself on his couch. I also returned to mine, revolving in my mind the late scene, not doubting but that my brother had been accessory to Julio’s death. During the rest of the night, frequent groans assailed my ears: they proceeded from the overcharged soul of the marchese.

“ I, for some days, narrowly watched his motions, and often conversed of Julio. At such times he always appeared confused, and evaded the subject. I at length hinted my doubts, adding,
that

that I had already sufficiently proved my brotherly affection, not to be kept a stranger to any affair that concerned him. By these arguments, I brought him to divulge the fact. He informed me, that during your illness, you had sent for your beloved child Rosa, from the convent of Santa Maria, and that it was her presence, and the resemblance she bore to her deceased mother, which soothed your sorrow, and you, at length, recovered; that he had traced a messenger from Julio's mansion to Florence; and that, in consequence of the letter you received, your daughter was immediately conveyed back to the sisterhood. This event bred suspicion in the mind of the marchese, and he watched an opportunity of conversing with Julio in private. Ere long, his desire was gratified. When my brother taxed him with having betrayed to you the secret, he solemnly denied the charge. The marchese then ordered him to divulge
the

the contents of the packet which had been forwarded to Florence. Julio was confused; my brother threatened; when, at length, falling on his knees, he confessed that the letter was written as from a stranger, and contained an intimation of some secret enemy having plotted your ruin. Julio had likewise cautioned you to beware of your daughter's safety."

"Such, indeed, were the contents of a mysterious letter I received," exclaimed the duca, and again relapsed into silence.

"This avowal," continued the monk, "enraged the marchese. In the violence of his passion, he struck the supplicating Julio to the earth.—'Perhaps,' exclaimed he, 'it is but an evasion, and you have really betrayed me.'"

"This idea so forcibly influenced my brother's mind, that he put an end to his existence by strangulation, a bravo assisting."

The duca hid his face with his hand, and groaned aloud.

“ My brother then informed me, that on the discovery of the body, the ignorance of the people attributed Julio’s death to sudden convulsions, which they supposed had seized him.”

Ubaldo then continued to relate the manner in which signor Giuseppe Cazinini had been educated. He acquainted the duca with the oath administered to his son, and the plausible story that had influenced him to adopt such a step.

The duca trembled, and turned pale.

He acquainted him with their residence at Naples, from whence the extravagance of the marchese, and his addiction to gaming, had obliged them to retire.

“ The

“ The natural gloominess of my brother’s mind accorded well with a monastic life. He entered the convent of the Dominicans in this city. Being wholly dependant on him, I was compelled to follow his example, and become a monk of Santa Croce.

“ My brother still harboured in his mind the same rooted hatred to your house, and determined to revenge himself by the hand of your own son! he would then have gloried in telling him the atrocity of his guilt, and pointed out self-murder as the only fitting means to terminate his detested existence. Thus, his vengeance would have been satiated, in the destruction of the male branch of your family.

“ Florence being your constant place of residence, he determined to make it his also. Spies were constantly watching your motions, but no suitable opportunity was found. My brother, still possessing large sums of money, from

the sale of his estates, made your son a proper allowance. He passed in Florence for a stranger, who intended making this city the place of his residence.

“ My brother soon became remarkable for the austerity of his character, and was at length preferred to the office of an inquisitor!—I pursued the same steps, in the hope of one day attaining the situation of abbot of Santa Croce. To forward this plan, I readily entered into the madre’s scheme respecting the conte, as her interest would have greatly forwarded my design. I did not fail to entrust my brother (now known by the name of Girolamo) with every circumstance.

“ When I communicated to him the discovery which had taken place, respecting the conte and signora Maddalena, a fresh idea of revenge entered his mind. He bade me urge the madre to pursue the most rigorous measures, and, some days after, repaired himself to the convent, to strengthen her in her resolution.

lution. Thus he thought to bring your daughter to the stake, and utterly exterminate the race of Bertocci.

“ Having the officials of the Inquisition under his command, your motions were watched, and he became acquainted with your journey to the Castello di Valdarno. Your son was dispatched to perpetrate the deed of horror——”

“ Heavens !” exclaimed the duca——
“ and was it my son—— ?”

He was unable to proceed—his emotions stopped all utterance.

“ At his return,” continued Ubaldo, “ he informed my brother, that the sudden appearance of the conte Marcello had prevented the execution of the deed. No farther attempt was made, till the night when you endeavoured to gain admission to your daughter. In traversing an avenue, I beheld you. I repaired to the chamber where I knew

my brother then was. I found him anxiously waiting the arrival of your son ; for it was by Girolamo's order that you were admitted into the prison, and that your conductor left you in that dreary passage. Finding Giuseppe still delayed coming, and fearful that such an opportunity might never again occur, he snatched himself a dagger, which lay unsheathed, and, by a secret passage, soon gained the place where you stood.

“ During his absence, your son entered the chamber. I related what had occurred—he drew from his bosom a poniard, which he had carried since the night when he had taken the fatal oath of vengeance, with the intent, as I supposed, of perpetrating the deed, should my brother fail in his attempt. In a few minutes, Girolamo returned—fury and disappointment marked his features. It was some time ere I learned the failure of his design, but he felt reanimated on being made acquainted with Giuseppe's

seppe's proceeding. A considerable time elapsed ere his return, when he informed us, that he had vainly sought you throughout the prison.

‘ My orders, then, were disobeyed,’ cried Girolamo. ‘ Curse on the sluggish officials, that suffered him to pass the prison-gates!’

“ From that period the affairs of the Inquisition, respecting your daughter and the conte, wholly interested him. He inwardly gloried in the agonies which you must experience on Maddalena Rosa's account, and determined that you should first witness her death, which he thought inevitable, and afterwards receive the destined blow from Giuseppe's hand.”

Here Ubaldo concluded. The duca had listened to his recital with mingled sensations of dread, horror, and amazement; and was for some time unable to make the least reply. He soon quit-

ted the cell, having first assured the monk that every effort should be set on foot to obtain a mitigation of his punishment.

The duca repaired to the grand inquisitor, who was already in possession of Ubaldo's relation. Giuseppe's residence was known to many of the officials, one of whom was immediately dispatched to desire his attendance at the Inquisition. Great was the duca's agitation during the intervening period. His name was at length announced—the door was thrown open, and Giuseppe entered ! He started on beholding the duca, who, unable to resist the powerful workings of his bosom, flew towards him with open arms, and clasping him to his breast, sobbed aloud—" My son ! my son !"

CHAP. V.

————— Let order die,
And let this world no longer be a stage,
To feed contention in a ling'ring act ;
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
And darkness be the burier of the dead.

SHAKSPEARE.

UBALDO'S confession was exhibited the following morning, by the grand inquisitor to the other lords of the Holy Office, when Girolamo and the monk were both conducted before the tribunal.

The confession made to the duca Bertocci, on the preceding night, was forthwith read aloud by the secretary, at the conclusion of which, Ubaldo was order-

ed to ratify the same on oath. Falling upon his knees, he pressed the sacred missal to his lips, evincing the most unfeigned contrition for his atrocious guilt, at the same time throwing himself on the mercy of his awful judges.

Girolamo, who had listened unmoved to the circumstantial detail of his dreadful crimes, was next called upon to avow or deny the fact; but he maintained a sullen silence. His arms continued wrapped within the long folds of his black garment, and his horrific eyes were rivetted, with an expression of dreadful malignity, on the person of his still prostrate brother. Thrice was the exhortation repeated; but Girolamo, like a statue, heard, unmoved, the address of the grand inquisitor, who was on the point of summoning the familiars to conduct him to the rack, when disdainfully motioning his left hand, and with a haughty inclination of the head, he
spoke

spoke to the following effect :—" Think not so meanly of my nobility, as to imagine that I shall basely supplicate your mercy. The confession of this despicable villain, with whose ignoble soul I disclaim all kindred, is indeed true in its utmost extent. Revenge hath been the source of all my actions; it is that noble passion which, for many years, has rendered life supportable, and which now inspires me with fortitude to endure your tortures, and disdain that death I am inevitably doomed to suffer. Think not that the cause of religion instigated me to become one of your order. No, I deemed it the most convenient mask to veil the secret purposes of my soul. 'Tis true, I have been frustrated in my grand attempt; yet, think not that death-dealing vengeance sleeps within my breast; no, the glorious passion now bursts forth, and thus fulfils its last grand great purpose."

As he pronounced these words, he drew a poniard from his bosom, and furiously rushed towards his brother; when the inquisitors precipitately rose from their seats, to stay his dire intent.

“Die, miscreant!” loudly vociferated Girolamo.

At that instant the dagger’s hilt twice drank Ubaldo’s blood, who, groaning, called for mercy, and expired.

Already was the weapon raised to pierce his own detested bosom; but the inquisitors seized, and after a violent struggle, wrenched it from his nerved grasp. The fratricide Girolamo gnashed his teeth, and violently clenched his hands, yet dripping with the purple gore; but suddenly turning his hateful regard on the ghastly features of the lifeless Ubaldo, the welcome sight reanimated his dark soul, and his features were suffused

fused with a horrid smile; like the sun's faint gleam, piercing a tempest-fraught cloud; or the keen lightning's blaze, momentarily irradiating the pitchy atmosphere, but to render the murky night still more dreadful.

“ Now, lead me to the stake!” cried Girolamo; “ and you, my lords, you who have witnessed my determined spirit, be also present at my torments; then learn, that the marchese Monti can defy your utmost malice, and expire without a groan.”

After being sentenced to experience every torture which the tribunal could inflict, the guilty wretch was conducted back from the chamber of office to his lonely dungeon.

When abandoned to his meditations, the condemned Girolamo felt no sting of conscience; the same obduracy continued

nued to mark his conduct. He passed his time in execrations at the failure of his attempt on the duca Bertocci and his son, and in sometimes yielding to the diabolical pleasure he experienced, in having put a period to his wretched brother's existence.

The dreary hour of midnight at length arrived, when he was dragged to the dungeon of torture. With the most hardened contumacy, he yielded his body to every excruciating pang that could be inflicted; not one groan found passage from his labouring bosom; his excessive pride enabled him to endure, in succession, the infliction of each punishment. Girolamo was then supported to his gloomy abode, to sustain, unpitied and unheard, the gnawing anguish of his lacerated limbs.

For three successive nights, sleep visited not the wretched culprit. At length

length his pangs, in some degree, subsiding, nature became exhausted, and, on the fourth night, he closed his deadened eyes. Suddenly, the lengthened toll of a bell aroused him from his unquiet slumber. Girolamo knew the knoll; it was to him death's boding sound—the heavy call of San Domenico, which had so often announced to the innocent victims of that tribunal their approaching end.

Such was, indeed, the midnight signal for the Act of Faith to be performed the following day. The dungeon door was, shortly after, thrown open, and some of those familiars who had so repeatedly obeyed Girolamo's nod, now vociferated dreadful curses on his head, at the same time presenting him with the painted garment called Samaretta, with which he was commanded to cover himself. The officials then quitted the cell.

Girolamo

Girolamo seized the horrid vestment ; it was of black cloth, whereon were represented flames and painted figures of demons, in the midst of which was portrayed, to the life, his own dark countenance. A direful oath escaped Girolamo's lips ; he, frowning, gnashed his teeth, and, enraged, cast the mantle from him.

Again the familiars appeared : they uttered threats, and vented imprecations on his tardiness : resistance was of no avail ; Girolamo sullenly threw off the inquisitorial garb, which he had still continued to wear, and covered himself with the infamous habit. He was then led forth to the chamber of incurables, where he continued, until the prison clock proclaimed the fourth hour of morning. Bread and figs were then sparingly tendered him ; but Girolamo, without deigning to speak, waved his hand in token of refusal.

By

By sunrise, the great bell of the Dominicans was heard: it was the signal, and thousands prepared to attend the miserable spectacle.

On a scaffold, opposite the grand gate of the Inquisition, were seated one of the lords of that tribunal and a secretary, who read over, in an audible voice, the names of all such criminals who were to attend the procession.

Of those wearing the sambenito, the number was very considerable; but one culprit only was to share a similar fate with Girolamo. It was an unfortunate female, who, seduced in early life from the path of virtue by some base villain's insidious arts, had abandoned herself to the commission of every crime, and had lastly been accused of heresy before the holy table of office.

San Domenico being the first founder
of

of this tribunal, the monks of that order preceded the fraternity of every other convent in this procession. Before them was carried the banner of the Inquisition ; it was of the finest crimson velvet, fringed with gold, and spotted with stones of immense value ; in the middle was most wonderfully wrought in needlework, the figure of the saint, in the habit of a Dominican ; his right hand bore an olive branch, and in his left he brandished a naked sword ; he appeared to be ascending on a cloud ; at his feet a dog lay couchant, from whose mouth issued a brand, whose flaming point was directed towards a sphere, emblematical of the world ; over his head was a scroll, whereon the words—“ *Misericordia et Justitia,*” were embroidered ; the reverse of this banner displayed the appearance of a bleeding cross.

Next issued from the gaol those prisoners deemed penitents, their heads uncovered,

covered, and bare-footed, bearing each a burning taper in his hand. They were severally accompanied by two respectable persons of the city, who acted as their sureties, and walked on either side of them in the procession.

After these was borne a ponderous crucifix of silver, the martyred figure of the Saviour of mankind being of virgin gold. The front of this cross faced those who preceded it, to denote that Heaven's mercy would be extended to all true penitentiaries ; its back was turned on Girolamo and the female, who followed after, each accompanied by a Jesuit and a friar, preaching, in the same breath, repentance and eternal torments.

In succession were carried on staves the sculptured effigies of two persons, supposed heretics, who had expired under the infliction of the torture, when in the prison of the Inquisition. Then
came

came two sledges, drawn by black horses, bearing the uncovered coffins that contained their putrid corpses, which were to be cast amidst the flames, and burned to ashes.

With folded arms, in loose black habits that totally obscured their countenances, followed the familiars, officials, and torturers, to the number of fifty. After these came the vicar, the notary, and a secretary, bearing the laws of the Holy Tribunal, on a cushion wrought with crosses of silver.

Twenty youths, habited in scarlet and white robes, next appeared, waving censers, that perfumed the air with aromatic odours. Amidst these, affixed to the point of a spiral wand of ebony, was the representation of the bloody stained napkin, or Santa Veronica.

Under a superb canopy, supported by
four

four distinguished persons of the city, sumptuously habited (who deemed this employment a peculiar honour conferred on them), walked the great judge of the Inquisition. His habit was most splendid, and the train of his robe was upheld by two noblemen of Florence; the other lords of the Holy Office then followed. Behind them came the reverend fathers of saint Ambrose, the monks of saint Laurence, and the mendicant friars of saint Francis.

The numerous magistrates of the city, robed, came in succession, according to their several dignities; then the most opulent of the citizens, each uncovered, and holding in his hand a crucifix; lastly, the foot-guard and a troop of horse terminated this show of splendour and misery.

Having traversed all the noble places and streets of Florence, the procession
at

at length entered the magnificent church of the Dominicans. Its structure was Gothic, and in the form of a cross. Benches were fitted up the whole length of the great aisle, on which the prisoners and their sureties seated themselves.

The Dominicans and the monks of the other orders that attended, took their station around the high altar, which was covered with black cloth, and simply adorned with six candlesticks of silver, burning lofty tapers of green wax. The supreme inquisitor, with his brethren, mounted a sumptuous throne, purposely erected, to the left of the altar, while the grand duke and his nobles ascended a canopied gallery, on the opposite side.

The various citizens took their respective stations, and the immense concourse of people, kneeling, filled every avenue of the building.

The

The silver cross being placed, with great solemnity, on the holy table, a Dominican monk delivered a discourse, wherein he fully explained the laws and institution of this sacred tribunal, and greatly enlarged on the theme of mercy, which, he alleged, was its most striking characteristic.

This harangue being concluded, the notary of the Inquisition read aloud the names and several crimes of those prisoners, then present, who had been cited before the Table of Office, but who, by contrition, sought mercy at the hands of their judges; each criminal extinguishing his taper, and falling on his knees, during the time his name and heresy were thus proclaimed.

The grand inquisitor, then, in an audible voice, freed these unhappy victims from the sentence of excommunication, wherewith they had been loaded.

After

After which, they were permitted to approach the steps of the altar, where a monk attended, who held forth a missal, which they severally kissed.

This ceremony ended, the name of the female was at length proclaimed. Girolamo, as awakened from a trance, fixed his eyes upon the object who was to share a similar fate with himself. Violent emotions wrung his breast, and, shuddering, he turned his eyes from the sight.

Her crimes being enumerated, she was by the grand inquisitor proclaimed incurable, and, after receiving from him the blow of excommunication, was formally delivered over to the secular arm, which immediately passed on her the sentence of death.

In an audible voice, the secretary then called forth the name of Girolamo,
otherwise

otherwise marchese Monti. At that instant, a piercing shriek was heard; it proceeded from the condemned female. Every one imagined that this exclamation originated in the dread she felt at her approaching end; but far different was the reality from this supposition. She remembered not the altered features of the monk; neither did she know him by the name of Girolamo; but when the name of Monti struck her ear, a thousand horrid recollections rushed upon her brain. She could not withstand the powerful workings of her mind, but fainted in the arms of the guards surrounding her.

The secretary continued to proclaim the monk's crimes, and the word *fratricide* was murmured from every quarter.

Being in holy orders, it was requisite that Girolamo should be degraded of his honours, and stripped of his sacred

vestments. The religious garb was then presented to him, and he was conducted towards the altar, that he might deliver it up to the grand inquisitor. He obeyed in silence, and with a sullen air complied with the various forms practised on this occasion. After which he surrendered himself to the secular judge, whose place it was to conduct him to the stake.

The immense concourse of persons were already in motion to quit the church, and hastened to the spot appointed for execution, when the female, having recovered from her lifeless situation, begged to address the lords inquisitors for a few minutes.

Some time elapsed ere this extraordinary request was complied with. She at length received permission, when, falling on her knees, she related in few words her unhappy tale.

Honorina

Honorina Celza, the real name of the culprit, was a native of Venice. She was born of a reputable family, and received an education far superior to her station in life. Those persons who were acquainted with Honorina, admired her excellent understanding, and aptness at study; she was universally caressed, and the idol of her fond parents. The repeated encomiums lavished on her abilities, ere she had attained her seventeenth year, kindled in her susceptible bosom the first sparks of vanity. She soon aspired to the company of those too much her superiors; nor was Honorina ever absent from places of public resort. It was at one of these entertainments that her personal charms attracted the attention of a youthful libertine. For some time his arts proved unsuccessful; at length he offered her honourable terms. She was too much prejudiced in his favour, and relying implicitly on his oaths and protestations, the villain, in an un-

guarded moment, triumphed in her ruin. This wretch was the marchese Monti! Honoria was one of the numerous victims sacrificed to his licentious desires.

Too soon she learned her error; his passion once gratified, he totally abandoned her, still adding to his crime, by making the circumstance known to all his associates. The fact in a short time became public, which soon put a period to her father's existence. Honoria then fled her native city, and sought an asylum in Florence; there she was compelled to associate with the most abject wretches, to procure a scanty subsistence.

Her mind became gradually hardened to scenes of iniquity, and she swore eternal hatred to that sex which had first led her from the path of virtue.

During several years she totally abandoned herself to the commission of the most flagrant crimes, when suddenly the recollection of her mother took possession

session of her mind. Honoria repaired to Venice; but on applying for admission, she was thrust from the door. Violent in her emotions, she cursed that being who had borne her, and meditated the direst scheme of revenge; this she compassed by effecting the death of her parent. This atrocious deed was accomplished with so much art, that no suspicion was attached to Honoria, who became thereby possessed of her mother's property.

With this acquisition of fortune she returned to Florence, where the recollection of her guilt embittered each moment of her wretched existence. To blunt the goading sting of conscience, Honoria hardened her mind still more in iniquity; for despairing of Heaven's mercy, she inwardly cherished the most daring opinions, in opposition to the Catholic belief. Her freedom of speech soon subjected her to the inquisitorial power, where, notwithstanding her pro-

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testations,

testations, she was adjudged an arch-heretic, and one totally abandoned of Heaven

During her interrogatories, Girolamo had been always present, and was himself the most forward in condemning her. The wretched Honoria little imagined, as trembling she heard his threats, that he was the sole cause of all her crimes. But not so Girolamo; he knew the culprit well, yet felt no touch of remorse for his crime—no pity for the object, whose guilt had originated with himself.

When the secretary repeated the well-remembered name of Monti, it awakened in Honoria's breast the most agonizing sensations, and caused, for a short period, the total suspension of every faculty.

In her confession she protested that Girolamo was the author of her crimes; she praised that Divinity, whose wonder-working power would thus punish
his

his guilt; and concluded by glorifying Heaven's supreme decree, that so justly doomed her to the death she merited.

A dreadful murmur echoed through the church, as the culprits were hurried forth to execution. Many pitied Honoria's fate; but universal execrations were loaded on the hateful Girolamo. When at the stake, his murderous arm was first severed from his body, and cast into that fire already consuming the penitent Honoria. The chain was then affixed to Girolamo's body, who was sentenced to be burned by a slow fire; yet he shrunk not from the scorching flame that gradually consumed his flesh, and ended at length his detested existence.

Thousands witnessed the appalling spectacle, but not one pitying sigh was heard. He expired amidst the shouts and curses of the surrounding multitude.

CHAP. VI.

————— Oh, my soul's joy !
If, after every tempest, come such calms,
May the winds blow, till they have waken'd death !
And let the lab'ring bark climb hills of seas,
Olympus high ; and duck again as low,
As hell's from heav'n ! If I were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy ; for, I fear,
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort, like to this,
Succeeds in unknown fate.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE powers of imagination fail—language is too feeble—words cannot paint the interesting meeting that took place between the duca Bertocci and his son. The most powerful emotions frequently interrupted their conversation, and it was difficult to determine, whether paternal affection or filial love most predominated. They, at length, repaired

ed to the Bertocci palace, where a similar scene again took place; for, in embracing Giuseppe, Maddalena took to her arms that unknown stranger, who had so generously ministered comfort to herself, and whose soothing language had endowed the conte Marcello with fortitude and resignation, when prisoners in the solitary dungeons of the Holy Office.

How frequently did their reciprocal transports burst forth!—how often did Giuseppe press his lovely sister to his palpitating bosom, while the enraptured duca shed tears of joy upon his virtuous children, mentally glorifying that Supreme Deity, by whose wonderful decree he was thus restored to unforeseen happiness!

Giuseppe, by his father's desire, circumstantially related the various incidents of his life. The recital awakened

in the duca's bosom a thousand varied sensations. How did he tremble with painful apprehension at the dangerous counsels which had been instilled into his son's breast!—what fond rapture did he experience, on finding that he possessed such innate virtue, as to resist their baleful influence!

In the course of his relation, the duca became acquainted with Giuseppe's passion for Antonia, and her prepossession in his favour. Fearful, in the extreme, lest any incident should occur to damp the happiness of his child, he dispatched a messenger, on the instant, conveying to Antonia's father a recital of the late extraordinary events that had occurred, and the consequent change in Giuseppe's situation.

The conte Marcello Porta, having fully complied with the several articles stipulated in his sentence, was finally released

released from the prison of the Holy Office.

On his return to the Porta Palace, he was joyfully received by his numerous domestics, who testified their love in clamorous acclamations. But who can imagine the ecstasy of joy that thrilled the breast of the good and faithful Gerardo ! he fell prostrate before the conte : he kissed his feet, clasped his knees, and plenteously bedewed his outstretched hand with tears, that issued from an o'ercharged heart. He strove to pour forth blessings, but his faltering tongue denied all utterance, and he sunk fainting to the earth, o'ercome by this excess of pleasure.

After having with difficulty forced himself from his attendants, the conte flew to his chamber, where he was instantly joined by his friend Viviani. Their arms were open : they flew to

each other's embrace, while either turned his face, to hide the tear which involuntarily burst forth. After a pause of considerable length, they regained the faculty of speech: their joy was reciprocal, and Viviani a thousand times congratulated his friend on his happy deliverance from the inquisitorial power.

Having seated themselves, the conte, at the earnest desire of his friend, gave an exact account of every thing that had occurred to him in the Inquisition.

His relation created a thousand dreadful apprehensions in the breast of Viviani, who, at the conclusion of the narrative, again poured forth the glad effusions of his soul, in terms that strongly indicated the sincerity of his friendship.

Having fully satisfied Viviani's curiosity, the conte, in his turn, begged to be

be made acquainted with every occurrence that had taken place, since his unhappy arrest.

Viviani then informed him of Gerardo's visit to his hotel; from him he had first heard of the seizure of his person, by the officers of the Inquisition. He then explained his fruitless attempts to gain admittance to the prison of the Holy Office: he related his interview with the duca Bertocci, and the meeting which took place with the madre Vittoria.—“At length,” continued Viviani, “I was compelled to abandon all idea of rendering you the smallest assistance. I neglected the repeated invitations of my friends; for the interest which I took in your fate, banished from my bosom every sensation of pleasure.

“Some days elapsed ere I summoned sufficient resolution to quit my hotel.

My

My first visit was to the habitation of donna Laura—yes, conte, she was the only object I deemed worthy of my confidence — her susceptible heart I thought formed for sympathy; nor was I deceived in my favourable opinion of that lovely creature. She heard the circumstance of your unmerited fate with pity, and alleviated the violence of my sorrow by the tenderest solicitude. Her gentle manners soon gained entire possession of my affections: her enchanting company was the only society I courted. She did not long remain a stranger to my passion: the confession, conte, proceeded from my own lips; it was favourably received; for the blushing Laura, with a noble frankness, avowed a reciprocal prepossession in my favour; and our union has been merely delayed till the result of your fate should be known. Ah, conte! innocence has prevailed: you are once more free: your Rosa is proved innocent, and restored to her

her fond parent's longing embrace; and Viviani, your friend, is happy beyond conception.

“ Yet, *à-propos*, conte, do you remember the story of the avvocato and the beautiful Teresa, his immaculate daughter?”

“ Yes, Viviani; for the recollection of your woe-begone countenance, and the long dressing-gown that enveloped your bruised limbs, will never escape my memory.”

“ Well, conte, you remember that I swore vengeance on the jilts; and it is some few days since I found a glorious opportunity of putting my threat into execution.”

“ Pray gratify me by a relation of the circumstances.”

“ Returning to my hotel, from the mansion of my Laura, two females passed me in the strada, and I instantly recognised the arch jades, with whom I had the unfortunate rencontre on the
banks

banks of the Arno. The disagreeable sequel of that adventure recurred to my mind, and I determined on a retort.

“ I observed, that they had not noticed me, or, at any rate, did not retain the slightest recollection of my person. I followed their steps, at some distance, till they arrived at the suburbs of the city, at which time each surrounding object was partly obscured by the dusk of evening. The situation being unfrequented, I was advancing towards them, unconscious what plan I should adopt, when suddenly one of the sisters coughed aloud three distinct times. It struck me, on the instant, that this must be some signal, and I quickly retired within the portico of an adjoining mansion.

“ The ladies made a halt, and carefully looking round, once more repeated the summons. It was answered this time; and presently after, a male figure appeared, into whose hands one of the females

males

males slipped a billet, and then both struck into an adjoining strada.

“ I quitted my hiding-place, and making towards the stranger, who had not retired many paces from the spot, I found from his appearance that he was a servant, or some person hired for this occasion. Without hesitation, I seized him by the collar, and partly unsheathing my sword, protested that I would show no mercy, unless he immediately delivered me the letter with which he had just been intrusted. I also tendered him a liberal reward, if he complied without delay. The knave did not require a moment’s hesitation : he instantly produced the billet, and, with the most obsequious bow, received the proffered gold.

“ I hastily broke the seal ; but evening was so far advanced, I could not peruse the contents. I engaged the fellow to accompany me to the first house of public resort, when I found that the
letter

letter contained an appointment to meet two favoured signors at dusk, the following evening. The writer had particularly described the dress and colour of the veil she purposed wearing, as also that of her sister.

“ My plan was immediately formed. I attempted, but being unable to affix the seal to the original letter, I copied it *verbatim*, in a hand resembling, as much as possible, that before me. I then told the fellow that I had been guilty of a gross mistake, as the contents of the note, which I had taken from him, did not in the least relate to the business I had conjectured. As a proof of what I had alleged, I bade him peruse both the writings. He was perfectly satisfied, and really credited my assertion. I then sealed the billet, which I bade him safely deliver to his employers.

“ Well pleased, he quitted me, bestowing a thousand benedictions on my head,

head, for the reward he had so easily obtained.

“ The very same evening, I dispatched a letter to the avvocato Feti, appointing him to attend two females of distinction, at the hour and place mentioned by the sisters. I described the habiliments, and alleged, as the cause for such secrecy, that they were on the point of allying themselves clandestinely, and that immense property having been bequeathed them, under various restrictions, his opinion, as a man of sound judgment, known integrity, and strict honour, was required on the occasion.

“ It was some time ere I could call to mind the residence of the sisters, which I had heard mentioned by donna Teresa, the avvocato's daughter, while attesting her own purity, and calumniating their characters.

“ I at length recollected the name of the strada in which they lived. I repaired thither without delay, and soon traced

traced the house, by the exact description I gave of the two young females, whose father is a well-known scrivener, of the name of Gonda. To him I likewise forwarded a note, alleging an affair of secrecy, as I had before done to the avvocato, and also requiring his attendance at the place of rendezvous.

“ I had now executed my plan, and returned to my hotel, overjoyed at the success of my enterprise.

“ During the night, an idea struck me, that I could even heighten the ridiculous scene which was to take place, by procuring the attendance of another female.

“ I rose early the next morning, habited myself most sumptuously, and repaired to the chapel of Santa Catarina, close to the Strada Nova. Soon was my utmost wish gratified. Yes, conte—I beheld the lovely one-eyed Teresa Feti.

“ Concealing my countenance as
much

much as possible, I approached her with seeming diffidence. My apparel instantly attracted her regard: she forgot her beads, and I, without much difficulty, engaged her in conversation.

“ I most passionately assured her, that I was only son of one of the most powerful noblemen of Italy; that the fame of her piety and mental accomplishments had brought me to Florence, unknown to my parents; for that I could not support existence, without privately declaring the ardency of my passion. I then assured her, that my intentions were most honourable, and that could she but deign to swerve, for once, from the rigid path of rectitude, I would introduce her to the company of two females of noble birth, who would vouch for the purity of my sentiments. In short, *conte*, she yielded to my entreaty, without alleging one argument in opposition to my wish.

“ I then named that evening for our meeting,

meeting, at the same hour and place as appointed by the females. I also begged that she would come veiled, and, describing the dress of one of the sisters, entreated that her dress might resemble it, as much as possible.

“ You may form some conjecture, conte, as to the state of my feelings during the day. Every hour was multiplied into an age: I really imagined (so much was my mind gratified with the idea of the approaching scene), that evening would never come.

“ The convent-bells sounding for vespers, at length proclaimed the near approach of the appointed hour.

“ Covering my face as much as possible with my hat, and throwing my long mantle over my shoulders, I repaired with hasty step to the scene of action.

“ Having cautiously concealed myself behind the large trunk of an adjoining tree, I anxiously awaited the arrival of this curious group.

“ Ere

“ Ere long I heard the sound of footsteps, and presently beheld two cavaliers, whose manners soon convinced me that they were the youths who attended to meet the daughters of the scrivener Gonda. Immediately after, habited precisely as I had desired, came the all-lovely and attractive Teresa Feti, the veil being plaited over her face in so many folds, that it was totally impossible to discern a trait of her countenance.

“ One of the young signors, at sight of the avvocato’s daughter, deceived by her attire, flew, on the wings of lightning, towards Teresa, and was in an instant prostrate at her feet. With the most visible marks of astonishment, she received this unexpected rencontre : she made a thousand awkward repulsive motions, but to no effect ; for the youth, conceiving this but an assumed bashfulness, pressed his suit with redoubled ardour ; and Teresa, not daring to unveil herself,

herself, was compelled to bear with fortitude this mortifying circumstance.

“ In a few seconds appeared signor Gonda, who advanced with cautious step and prying regard. No sooner had his eye caught the figure of Teresa, than he instantly paused ; then taking my letter from his pocket, perused it with seeming attention. Again he advanced ; and as he approached the place where I stood, some unconnected words struck my ear, which indicated his surprise at beholding one female only.

“ Scarce had he passed the tree by which I was concealed, when both his daughters hastily advanced. That cavaliero who had awaited at some distance the coming of his damsel, moved forward with precipitation, while his friend, who was still engaged with signora Feti, on beholding them, started back with surprise.

“ Teresa, thus freed from his importunities, flew towards the scrivener’s daughters,

daughters, believing them to be the distinguished females whom I had that morning described, screaming aloud for protection.

“ Signor Gonda, alarmed at the noise, turned his head; but, far from knowing his daughters thus veiled, believed them to be the two ladies mentioned in his appointment, and, with a quick step, made towards them.

“ At this critical juncture came the avvocato himself. At sight of the scrivener, to whom he was by no means partial, he made an abrupt halt, while his features underwent a variety of changes.

‘ Blessed Santa Catarina, my father here!’ exclaimed his daughter Teresa.

‘ Merciful Heaven, our father!’ reiterated Gonda’s hopeful children.

“ In an instant all was clamour and confusion. The two cavaleros, relying on their fleetness, immediately took to their heels. Teresa, affecting to swoon,

fell, groaning, on the turf, while signor Gonda began plentifully belabouring his panic-struck daughters.

“The furious avvocato, raving, approached his prostrate Teresa, whose nose he instantly tweaked with his utmost force. This endeavour to revive her proved of instantaneous effect, for she sprang from the earth, sending forth the most hideous yell. Her splenetic father, whose passion was now at its height, rushed on the innocent scrivener, conceiving he had been principally concerned in the cheat, as the dress of his daughters so exactly answered the description given of the females in my letter to him.

“The most dreadful contest immediately took place, and terrible blows were plentifully showered on either side. An unlucky stroke, at length, felled the avvocato, from whose nose issued a purple stream. Poor Gonda’s wig had been demolished at the commencement of
of

of the affray, so that his bald pate and tattered apparel made the most ludicrous appearance, as, champion-like, he stood over the fallen foe.

“ Teresa Feti, maddened at the disappointment of her fond hopes, enraged at finding she was thus duped, and firmly believing that the objects of her inveterate hate had planned this scheme, the situation of her father too, all conspired to rouse her into action. With the fury of a tigress, she flew at Gonda's daughters, whose limbs had already suffered from their father's harsh treatment.

“ Here a new scene commenced. The veils and other outward habiliments, not to forget the faces of these Amazons, soon bore convincing marks of the sharpness of their talons. The combat continued for some time with equal fury, when the approach of strangers at length put an end to the contest.

“ I then quitted my station unobserved, and almost expiring with excess

of laughter, just at the moment when an explanation was taking place, and my letters were produced on either side."

The conte was much entertained by the relation, and, smiling, congratulated Viviani on having so fully revenged himself on the authors of his former disappointment and disgrace.

In the evening the conte dispatched a billet to the duca Bertocci, entreating he might be permitted, the following day, to offer his respects in person. The duca's answer was favourable to his wishes.

How tediously lagged the intervening hours! what contrary emotions pervaded Marcello's breast! what inexpressible sensations agitated the susceptible bosom of the gentle Rosa! A pleasing circumstance, however, occurred, which, for a
time,

time, suspended this perturbation of her spirits.

That evening her loved friend Isabella was announced. They flew into each other's arms, and, for some time, tears alone expressed the poignancy of their sensations.

Maddalena then learned, with the utmost satisfaction, that the contessa Menzia had soon become acquainted with her lover's return to Naples, and that, through her entreaties, added to the melancholy state of Frederigo's mind, his parents had relinquished all idea of uniting him to Beatrice, should she even obtain a dispensation from her vow of celibacy, and had finally given their consent to his union with Isabella.

Maddalena was soon compelled to separate from her friend, who, instantly after, departed from Florence, to join at

Naples her beloved Frederigo. They parted, however, but for a short period, Maddalena having prevailed on Isabella to make Florence the future place of her residence.

The following morning, the conte Marcello, accompanied by his friend Viviani, with a palpitating heart, proceeded to the Bertocci palace, where he was received by the duca with every mark of affection, while pleasure animated Maddalena's tender bosom, on again beholding, after so many painful vicissitudes, the man she loved.

The conte, on hearing Giuseppe's eventful history, congratulated the duca with unfeigned joy, and warmly pressed to his heart the virtuous brother of his adored Maddalena.

Viviani's generous soul witnessed this scene with rapturous delight; and he
inwardly

inwardly rejoiced in the supreme felicity of his loved friend.

The duca's anxiety on his son's account was in a few days relieved, the messenger returning with the congratulations of Antonia's parents, and their consent to an alliance with his family.

This packet also contained an account of the decease of Antonia's brother, together with a confession he had made previous to his death, of having attempted the assassination of Giuseppe.

This haughty youth, finding his sister's affections irrevocably fixed on a being he deemed so unworthy of herself and family, had traced Giuseppe to Florence, where he hired bravoës; but mistaking the person of Marcello Porta for the object of his vengeance, had attacked him, as before related, when on his way to the cloisters of Santa Maria.

In

In this rencontre, he received a wound from the conte, which had long endangered his life; and on being conveyed from the scene of action by his domestic, who likewise concealed the body of the murdered assassin, the diamond cross found by Marcello Porta had escaped his bosom.

Shortly after his recovery, the unhappy youth fell a sacrifice to his own rashness, having been slain in a duel, which he fought on a false punctilio of honour.

During the residence of Antonia's brother at Florence, Ubaldo had been his confessor. That rash youth, finding the monk apt to his purpose, made him acquainted with the circumstance of his sister's love, only concealing the name of Giuseppe.

By Ubaldo's artful insinuations, the youth became more exasperated, and
then

then communicated to him the plan he had formed of assassinating Cazini. The monk applauded his resolution—adduced the most subtle arguments, to prove that he would be guilty of no crime, in thus ridding himself of a man who attempted to dishonour his family, and then promised him absolution for the diabolical act. The time was fixed, Ubaldo being an accessory in procuring the bravoos.

When the conte explained to the monk in the cloisters of Santa Maria, the base attack made upon his life, Ubaldo was thunderstruck : he had little imagined that the object of the youth's vengeance was the noble Marcello Porta. It was this circumstance which prompted him to leave the conte in the antique gallery, while he repaired to the madre Vittoria, whom he made acquainted with every circumstance relating to Antonia's brother.

The

The madre was astonished at the monk's relation, yet conjectured, that there must have been some mistake, as an alliance with the conte could not have been deemed dishonourable.

She, however, determined to ascertain whether it was really Marcello Porta who felt a passion for Antonia, ere she would admit him to her presence; and it was by her desire he was left in the gallery, and not conducted thence till the following morning.

Sister Beatrice, from whom nothing was concealed, soon became acquainted with this affair, which she afterwards related in her confession to the padre abate of Santa Croce. By this means the grand inquisitor gained his knowledge of the diamond cross, of which he had made inquiry during the conte's last examination.

Some

Some days after Isabella's departure from Florence, Maddalena Rosa received a packet, conveying the intelligence of her friend's happy union with Frederigo, and concluded in the following words:—"You, my loved friend, have endured the strange vicissitudes of the fickle goddess: your heroic virtue has uniformly supported you under the pressure of affliction. Isabella, too, has been the child of calamity; but the dark clouds, that lowered over her, are now dispersed: the genial sun of happiness sheds around its cheering rays, and I enjoy a bliss unchequered: the same smile irradiates my Rosa's countenance: we were the handmaids of dewy-cheeked sorrow: we are become joy's dimpled sisters, and soon, like me, you will experience a more than mortal felicity, in the possession of the deserving object of your love."

THE END.

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